

SPRING 2023

Centering

NEWS OF CENTRAL LUTHERAN | MINNEAPOLIS



A Lenten Season of Contemplation and Action



"In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen
we can hear the whisper of the heart
giving strength to weakness,
courage to fear, hope to despair."

-Howard Thurman

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Cover art:

A collage of photos taken by
Tom Baker at Manitou Photos
and various Central staff and leaders.



With a Commitment to

Contemplation & Action

Welcome to this issue of *Centering*. It is my joy and privilege to be the person who most closely works with everything that touches community here at Central. That means the community created by our living into the promises of being the Body of Christ on this corner in Minneapolis. It also means the larger community who walks through our doors, around our gardens, and parks in our lot every day of the week. This sense of community also follows you to the places you call community in your homes and schools and workplaces.

While the Restoration Center is a big part of the way we understand who we are as neighbors to each other in community, community cannot be contained in labels of insider and outsider language. Every time and place the Holy Spirit breathes through you with God's good creation, we are in community. We all come together with our gifts and skills and love and struggles. We all get to share them as we see fit and to the glory of the Creator who formed them in us. We are in community with the whole of creation: every stem, blossom, germ, rodent, and rock. Sometimes that feels overwhelming. Sometimes that feels exhilarating. Sometimes we just need to sit quietly in the midst of our community to dwell more deeply with the God who created us. Listening to creation and humanity deeply gets us in a position to walk alongside one another to create the change that's needed in our communities.

In this issue of *Centering* you will find some of the ways we have discerned together that we need to act together. You will find the ways we will learn together. You will find the ways we will sing and pray together. You will find the ways we will be generous together. God has given us one another to care for in community, and I am thankful I get to do this work at Central and in our community.

*Shalom,
Pastor Melissa*

Save the Date

The season of Lent is full of opportunities for us to worship and be together in community.

February 22

Ash Wednesday

12 noon and 7 p.m.

Worship Service: Confession, Ashes, and Holy Communion

1 p.m.

Soup and Salad Lenten Lunch

February 25-26

First Weekend in Lent

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.


Adult Forum: "10 Ways to Pray"

March 1

12 noon

Lenten Midweek Worship and Lunch

6 p.m.

In person or Zoom 

Contemplative Prayer and Conversation

March 4-5

Second Weekend in Lent

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Adult Forum: "Day Alone and Day Together"

Sunday, 12:30 p.m.

"Walking With" Listening Session


March 8

Homeless Day on the Hill

12 noon

Lenten Midweek Worship and Lunch

6 p.m.

In person or Zoom 

Contemplative Prayer and Conversation



March 11-12

Third Weekend in Lent

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Adult Forum: "Contemplation and Action"

Sunday, 4 p.m.

Temple Israel

Interfaith Civil Rights Journey Video and Panel

March 15


12 noon

Lenten Midweek Worship and Lunch

1 p.m.

"Walking With" Listening Session

6 p.m.

In person or Zoom 

Contemplative Prayer and Conversation

March 18-19

Fourth Weekend in Lent

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Adult Forum: "Being a Contemplative Congregation"

Sunday, 12 noon

Empowering Conversations

Sunday, 4 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian


Interfaith Civil Rights Journey Video and Panel

March 22

12 noon

Lenten Midweek Worship and Lunch



6 p.m.
In person or Zoom 
Contemplative Prayer and
Conversation

March 23

10 a.m.
"Walking With" Listening
Session

March 25-26

Fifth Weekend in Lent


Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
Adult Forum: "A Spiritual Practice of Listening"

Sunday, 12:30 p.m.
"Walking With" Listening Session

Sunday, 4 p.m.
Fellowship Missionary Baptist
Interfaith Service of Song and Reflection

March 29

12 noon
Lenten Midweek Worship and Lunch

6 p.m.,
In person or Zoom 
Contemplative Prayer and Conversation

April 1-2 Palm Sunday Weekend

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
Adult Forum: "Holy Week in Matthew's Gospel"

Sunday, 12 noon
Holy Land Trip Presentation

April 6 Maundy Thursday

12 noon
Worship

7 p.m.
Worship (With foot/hand
washing)

April 7 Good Friday

12 noon and 7 p.m.
Worship



April 8 Holy Saturday

5 p.m.
Easter Vigil and Fellowship

April 9 Easter Sunday

8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Festival Worship

9:30 a.m.
Easter Sunday Coffee Hour

April 15-16 Second Weekend of Easter

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
Adult Forum: "C3 Ministry Team Presentation"

Sunday, 12 noon
Empowering
Conversations

April 22-23 Third Weekend of Easter

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
Adult Forum:
Worship and Music



April 29-30 Fourth Weekend of Easter

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.
Rite of Confirmation Celebrated in Worship

Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
Adult Forum: Worship and Music



Community Committed to Contemplation & Action

The Community Area Cluster centers on welcoming all into life-giving community where relationships are fostered and a range of human needs are met.

At Central we see our work to end homelessness as a three-legged stool. You need every leg of it to work, and the balance can be precarious.

Leg One: Direct Service

The first and most historic leg is the direct service we provide with folks who are experiencing need. This is the Free Store, the Community Meals, Emergency Rental Assistance, and the Augsburg Central Health Commons. There are people in our community who have real needs for clothing, food, healthcare, and paying their rent. We try to meet these needs in a way that is low barrier and in relationship.



It's often not about the food or the clothes or the hygiene product, but it's getting to be seen as a human being, having some agency to choose your own belongings without a cost associated,

and it's about being known and loved. Being known and loved goes both ways. Our volunteers in these ministries get to know our guests and our guests get to know them. These relationships go a long way to ending stigma associated with homelessness, and these relationships provide connections for people who have been seen as folks on the margins.

Leg Two: Advocacy

The second leg of the stool is advocacy. Advocacy is using our collective voices to accomplish changes that we couldn't do alone. Many times, advocacy is done "on behalf" of the people most closely experiencing a problem. We do most of our advocacy work in cooperation with the other congregations of Align Minneapolis.



Align is the coalition of Minneapolis interfaith congregations that work together to end homelessness. One of the amazing things about our advocacy work through Align is that it is done in cooperation with Street Voices of Change, who are people with lived experiences of homelessness. Our advocacy is better with this guidance. The Align Central team is made up of very committed and knowledgeable people who meet on the fourth Sunday of the month to review and plan educational events and advocacy opportunities.

Right now, a focus of this ministry team is getting a housing bonding bill passed in this legislative session. There is not enough deeply affordable housing being built in Minnesota, and none can be built without



the state bonding money. The bill to follow for this bonding investment is HF302. The Align Central team is always looking for new folks to join them in this work. If you are interested, please just let Pastor Melissa know and she can make the connection.

Leg Three: Community Organizing

The third leg of the stool is community organizing. Community Organizing is when the group of people most deeply impacted by an issue work together with allies to get decision makers to say “yes” to the goal they are trying to win. Here at Central, the Street Voices of Change (SVoC) crew are the people doing community organizing. Their current goals are increasing the access to bathrooms in downtown, reforming a tool from the state government called Housing Supports, and getting the bills passed in the state legislature that will establish shelter standards on a state level.

Housing Support as it is currently formulated is a tool that helps people who are on Social Security, Disability, General Assistance, or Veteran’s Benefits get housing. The individuals pay in all their income for that housing and are given \$121 back to cover things like transportation, clothing, a phone, or anything else they need. This program keeps people in poverty and many people would rather

sleep outside than give up all their income to be housed.

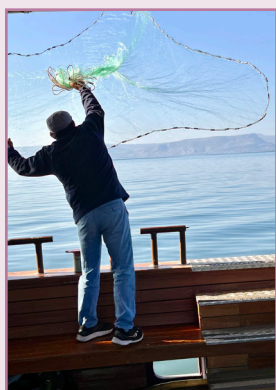
The first bill SVoC organizes around HF732/SF99 (Housing Support Reform) would change the formulation so that people would not pay more than 30% of their income to be housed. This will allow them to save money to move into market rate housing, to get a job, or to do something as simple as buy a treat for a grandchild. So far, the bill has passed its first committee hearing and is on its way to a second committee hearing. If it passes there, it will be brought to a vote in the House. As we get closer to the passage of this bill, please watch the *Spirit* to see how you can use your voice to support this change.



All of these ministries work together to honor our call to be sure everyone has a safe and dignified place to live and thrive and grow into the people God is calling us all to be.

Highs and Lows in the Holy Land

The elevation changes between Galilee, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem were hard to ignore. Descending to nearly 1500 feet below sea level



at the Dead Sea (the lowest place on earth) and then ascending to nearly 3000 feet in Jerusalem, our ears reminded us daily that we were far from the plains of Minnesota. Even more, the top of Mount Nebo in Jordan put us 5000 above sea level – another ear-popping encounter.

The change in elevation provides a metaphor that well-describes the juxtaposition of all we saw, heard, and experienced in the Holy Land and Jordan. We had mountain-top moments that included worshipping at The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem on the same day that Sally Azar, a child of that congregation and the first Palestinian woman ordained in the Holy Land was ordained in



synagogue – the worst week of violence between Palestinians and Israelis in over a decade.

Jerusalem. And, by the end of the week, we learned that nine individuals died in violence at a refugee camp and seven died near a

Like the change in elevation, the bookend experiences of Pastor Azar's ordination situated against the increasing violence in the region was something we all felt in our bodies as we prepared to return home.



The Holy Land in all her beauty and complexity is something none of us will forget anytime soon. We are grateful for the opportunity to have traveled together and the group looks forward to sharing experiences with you throughout the coming weeks.

I'll be ready to share thoughts when I return from sabbatical.

Until then, thank you for the opportunity to rest and renew. See you when I get back.

Pastor Stephanie



Generosity

Committed to Contemplation & Action

The Generosity Area Mission Cluster centers on the invitation for every child of God to share their gifts of time, abilities, and finances for the sake of God's mission in the world.



A life of faith is a life of listening. In the depths of our own souls, we listen for God. God is always with us: Emmanuel. As a community of faith, we listen for God. God is present in, with, and under the community's worship. As the beloved of God who walk with our neighbors, we listen for God. God connects us as neighbors and calls for us to tend to one another with kindness, compassion, justice, and love.

In the season of Lent, we are invited into intentional listening in these three ways: individually, as a faith community, and as we walk with our neighbors. God is present in all these ways, Emmanuel with us as individuals, community, and neighbors. Opportunities for this listening will be present as we gather for intentional times of contemplative prayer, formation, worship, empowering conversations, and small group reflection.

What a blessing that we listen for God in the most personal ways, as a beloved community, and as loving neighbors.

*Listening for God with you,
Pastor Peter*

Listening for God as Neighbors "Walking With" Initiative

The Council has spent significant time over the past year listening for God as we seek to walk with our neighbors. Two experts on people at the margins have helped the Council in their listening. The Council has developed four initial pathways that now need your collective wisdom and listening. Plan to attend one of these small group conversations and offer your faithful insights and deep listening for God.

Sunday, March 5 at 12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15 at 1 p.m.

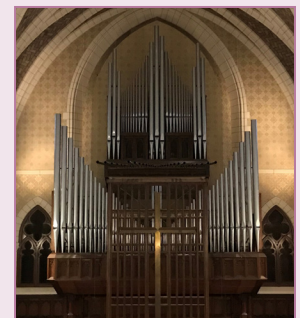
Thursday, March 23 at 10 a.m.

Sunday, March 26 at 12:30 p.m.

Pastor Peter will facilitate these sessions and some Council leaders will be present as we listen together.

Casavant Organ Information Meetings

During the season of Lent, you are invited to one of the Casavant organ information meetings. Isaac Drewes, our acting director for worship, and Pastor Peter will lead these information sessions with members of the Organ Committee. We will gather for a quick history and overview of the Casavant and move to spending time on the complex challenges for the organ at this moment. Watch the *Spirit* for the schedule of these important meetings.



Formation

Committed to Contemplation & Action

The Lifelong Formation Area Cluster centers on lifelong faith formation where all can develop a closer relationship with God and deepen their call for mission.

Listening for God as Community

Adult Forums

Sundays during Lent, 9:30 a.m.

Lower Narthex

You are invited to the Sunday morning adult forums in the season of Lent. Coffee and cookies are served down in the lower narthex. Here is the schedule as we gather to listen for God as a community.

"10 Ways to Listen for God" **February 26**

Pastor Kathie Nycklemoe will be here to lead us as a community in a reflection on ten essential ways to pray, ways to listen for God in our lives. This is the perfect forum to attend as Lent begins and we enter this intentional time of prayer as individuals, a community, and neighbors.

"Life Together: Day Alone & Day Together" **March 5**

Join Pastor Peter for the reflection on life together as the day alone and the day with community, confession, and care for the neighbor. We will return to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic, *Life Together*, to ground us in the conversation.

"Contemplation and Action" **March 12**

Join Pastor Melissa as she leads the conversation on how contemplative prayer leads to action in the world and how action

in the world leads us back to contemplative prayer. It is in this exchange that prayer leads us to our neighbor.

"Being a Contemplative Congregation" **March 19**

Join Pastor Peter for a conversation on what it means to be a contemplative congregation. We will explore the possibilities of how a

congregation that tends the pathways of prayer is also a congregation that welcomes all, no exceptions. Contemplative prayer shapes our life in God and so we innately go out to serve.

"A Spiritual Practice of Listening" **March 26**

Join Pastor Melissa as she picks up on the invitation to listen for

God in our neighbor. What does it mean to walk with all the beloved of God? How does "walking with" shape prayer and the ways we listen as individuals, a community, and neighbors? How is the spiritual discipline of listening shaping the current offering of the Ignatian Spiritual Discernment movement?

"Holy Week in Matthew's Gospel" **April 2**

Join Pastor Peter for a reflection on Holy Week and how Matthew's Gospel leads us to the cross and empty tomb. What are the moments of prayer in Holy Week and how do they share our individual, community, and neighborly listening for God?



Worship

Committed to Contemplation & Action

The Worship Area Cluster centers on welcome, hospitality, and the central act of the church as people of God gather for corporate worship.

Listening for God as Individuals Lenten Devotional

The Prayer Ministry Team has put together a Lenten devotional, grounded in a daily prayer written by a member of Central. The devotional is available in print and will be e-mailed each day for your own personal time of prayer and listening for God. Copies of the devotional in print will be available at the Welcome Desk. Thank you to all who were able to contribute a prayer to help us listen for God each day.

Lenten Wednesday Contemplative Prayer Wednesdays during Lent, 6 p.m. *In person or on Zoom*

You are invited to join Pastor Melissa and Pastor Peter for these Lenten contemplative prayer times. Each week we will pause and explore a different prayer form that opens us to listen for God in our personal lives. We will then be sent out for the week to explore this practice and return the next Wednesday to reflect on the practice and explore a new possibility.

Each Wednesday gathering stands on its own, so you are welcome to join one, two, or all five of these important Lenten Contemplative Prayer opportunities. It is offered in person or on Zoom. The Zoom link will be on the website and will be included

in the ENews each weekend in Lent. Plan to attend as you tend to your personal listening for God in prayer.



Listening for God Contemplative Prayer Sunday, March 12, 12:30 p.m. Sanctuary

You are invited to the monthly Listening for God contemplative prayer time on Sunday, March 12 at 12:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

This contemplative prayer time is generally offered each month on the second Sunday. Pastor Peter leads this prayer gathering, grounded in various contemplative prayer practices. Each month a practice is introduced and then experienced. Then we pause, and those who wish to share can reflect on the experience and how God is present. It is also a time when you do not need to share anything; simply be present for this time of prayer. We meet in the prayer space in the back corner of the sanctuary.



Lectio Visio Prayer Thursday, March 16, 11 a.m. Zoom

You are also invited to the Lectio Visio (or visual prayer) time on the third Thursday, March 16, at 11 a.m. This prayer is offered on Zoom, a link will be available on

the website and in the ENews. For more information about these two prayer offerings please contact Pastor Peter or Pastor Melissa.



Central Lutheran
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**Ash Wednesday
services:**

12 noon & 7 p.m.

**Maundy Thursday
service:**

12 noon & 7 p.m.

**Good Friday
services:**

12 noon & 7 p.m.

**Easter Vigil:
5 p.m.**

**Easter Sunday
services:**

8:30 a.m. &
10:30 a.m.

Exploring the promise of God for all

AN EVERYDAY CHURCH FOR EVERYONE

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