

Grace Notes

Grace Lutheran Church, 2006 60th Street, Kenosha, Wisconsin



January 17, 2021

Gathering Liturgy for Second Sunday after Epiphany

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 94)

P Blessed be the holy Trinity,
+ one God, who forgives all our
sin, whose mercy endures
forever.

C Amen

P God of all mercy and
consolation, come to the help of
your people, turning us from our
sin to live for you alone. Give us
the power of your Holy Spirit
that we may confess our sin,
receive your forgiveness, and
grow into the fullness of Jesus
Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the
presence of God and of one
another.

Most merciful God,

**C we confess that we are
captive to sin and cannot
free ourselves. We have
sinned against you in
thought, word, and deed, by
what we have done and by
what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with
our whole heart; we have
not loved our neighbors as
ourselves. For the sake of
your Son, Jesus Christ, have
mercy on us. Forgive us,
renew us, and lead us, so
that we may delight in your
will and walk in your ways,**

to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P In the mercy of almighty
God, Jesus Christ was given to
die for us, and for his sake God
forgives us all our sins. As a
called and ordained minister of
the church of Christ, and by his
authority, I therefore declare to
you the entire forgiveness of all
your sins, in the name of the
Father, and of the + Son, and of



the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

GATHERING SONG "This Little Light of Mine" (ELW 677) vv. 1 & 4

1 *This little light of mine, I'm
goin'-a let it shine;
this little light of mine, I'm goin'-
a let it shine;
this little light of mine, I'm goin'-
a let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it
shine.*

3 *Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna
let it shine;
Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a
let it shine;
Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a
let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it
shine.*

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the love of God, and the
communion of the Holy Spirit be
with you all.

C And also with you.

GLORY TO GOD (ELW p. 148)

P Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on
earth.

**C Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you,
we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the
world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand
of the Father: receive our
prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy
Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give.

May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and

the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Readings for Second Sunday after Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1–10

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

Then the LORD called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.”

But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.

The LORD called again, “Samuel!”

Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.”

But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.”

Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!”

And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

¹LORD, you have searched me out;

O LORD, you have known me.

²**You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.**

³You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴**Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O LORD, know it altogether.**

⁵You encompass me, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it. ...**

¹³For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴**I will thank you because I am marvelously made; your works are wonderful, and I know it well.**

¹⁵My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶**Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; my days were fashioned before they came to be.**

¹⁷How deep I find your thoughts, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸**If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.**

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial.

“All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price;

therefore glorify God in your body.

Gospel: John 1:43–51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”



When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”

Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?”

Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Pastor Barker's Sermon on 1 Samuel 3:1–10

When I was growing up most summers my family would spend a week in the Sierra Mountains. And one of our traditions is my Dad, my brother, and I would look at the majestic mountains all week and ask a question, “Do you think we could get to that point?” as we pointed to different places.

We would kick this question around all week, and then the second to last day of the trip we would spend the day trying to get there. Oftentimes this involved going off trail.

One year we were in Donner Lake and each day could see a train weaving through the mountains above. We wondered if we could get to those train tracks or above them, and with that in mind went on a bush whacking adventure.

We figured out a place to jump off for on this adventure and within about ten minutes came to what looked like a train tunnel. But, it was weird, because there were no train tracks. We paused for a long time to think about this.

Eventually we decided there was no way for a train to run without tracks so it must be safe to walk through.

It ended up being a very long dark tunnel. As we were walking my dad said, “You know, if a train comes you will have to immediately throw yourself into the corner of this tunnel and cling as tightly as possible to the wall to not get crushed.

And then all three of our imaginations started to run wild. What if there was a hover train or a ghost train? The three of us got so frightened we climbed out of a crack in the tunnel and felt safer walking along a six inch ledge on the outside of the tunnel.

Now, in fairness, we had been watching trains go by all week and were very specifically on a hike to get to a point above the tracks. So it just didn't make sense why this train tunnel didn't have tracks.

Finally, we made it to the other side of this tunnel. And after walking for four or five more hours across several ridges, we finally got to the place we had been pointing to all week. And

when we looked down we could see the train tracks. As we followed the train track line we realized that at some point they had lain some new track. Now the train veered behind the mountain range we had seen with the train tunnel with no track.

I share that story as a way of inviting us into thinking about times were we have experienced mystery. Where what is happening doesn't make sense to us.

Our passages today focus on this type of mystery. Both when Samuel meets God in the Temple and when Philip introduces Nathaniel to Jesus, there is a moment of great confusion and not perceiving what is going on. To appreciate this I want to deeply dive into our First Samuel passage.

Our passage this morning starts with this great verse, “The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.” There is a sense of moral and spiritual decline. Things are not going well and it

feels like God is absent to God's people.

As we start 2021, this feels like an apt description. I've talked to so many people in the last week who just simply told me, "I'm exhausted." I think some of us thought if we can just find a way to push through 2020 and all that tumult 2021 might be a little smoother. And two weeks in, that certainly has not felt like the case. And in this exhaustion I have heard people wondering about what role churches are being called to play now in this year.

And I relate to this question, "God where are you leading us? As we start another year of digital church what are you calling your people to? As our government feels on shaky ground what are you asking us to be about?"

There's a way in which I'm longing for a vision from God for 2021, and again I think there are many people that have a similar longing. God speak to us!

God does end up speaking in our passages today. The initial problem though is it is not perceived that it is God at all.

Samuel keeps hearing his name being called. And Samuel, by the way, is a child of miraculous birth who is living in

the Tabernacle with the priest Eli.

Samuel, upon hearing his name, keeps thinking that it is Eli calling him. And that is a logical conclusion. He is staying with Eli and Eli is partially blind and we can imagine needs quite a bit of help from Samuel. So, it makes sense that Eli would be calling him.

But, there ends up being a mystery. Because this happens twice, and each time Eli says I did not call you. So who is calling then? This becomes very mysterious.

Eli on the third time realizes it that God is speaking to Samuel and encourages him to listen. He finally understands.

This feels so true to me



about discerning what God is up to in our life. God rarely speaks in a loud audible voice to us, like Jesus heard at his baptism last week. It's a much more

mysterious voice that we often need help hearing.

God so often speaks to us in a timely scripture reading, or a timely phone call, or a surprising-well-timed special gift, or a hymn line, or in a conversation with a friend, or a walk on a path. And even when we discern it is God trying to get our attention often what exactly God wants us to hear is mysterious.

And I love in this passage how Samuel ends up coming to realize it is God's voice speaking to him. Eli, both a fellow faith pilgrim, but also an elder, explains to him what is happening.

So often in our own faith walks, it is with the discernment of others that we discover what God is saying to us. And oftentimes it is leaders and those who are wise who give us the interpretation tools so we can know where God is leading.

So let me close with an offer. If you are feeling disoriented right now you are in good company. But if you are, and you would be interested in someone doing some listening and praying with you about what God is up to in your life I would be excited to be part of that process with you.

Amen.

Creed, Prayers, and Communion Liturgy

HYMN OF THE DAY "Here I Am, Lord" (ELW #574) vv. 1 & 3

1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?"

Refrain: *Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.*

*I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?" Refrain

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Welcoming New Members to the Congregation
PRESENTATION OF NEW MEMBERS

P Dear friends, we give thanks for the gift of baptism and for these people, one with us in the body of Christ, whom we welcome as new members into the life and ministry of this congregation. *A representative of the congregation or the presiding minister may introduce each new member or household.*

Karen Kempinen has come to our congregation from Lakeside Lutheran Church in Kenosha.

APOSTLES' CREED

P With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

ADDRESS AND QUESTIONS

The presiding minister addresses those being welcomed.

P In baptism, we are welcomed into the body of Christ and sent to share in the mission of God. We are called to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Sister in Christ, do you intend to continue in the covenant of your baptism among God's people in this place?

R₇ I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.

P People of God, do you promise to support and pray for Karen in her life in Christ?

C **We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.**

WELCOME

Those being welcomed face the assembly.

P Let us welcome this sister in Christ to this community of faith.

C **We rejoice with you in the life of baptism. Together we will give thanks and praise to God and proclaim the good news to all the world.**

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYERS "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (ELW #752)

Lord, listen to your children praying,

Lord, send your Spirit in this place;

Lord, listen to your children praying,

send us love, send us power, send us grace.

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PRAYERS

P Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray.

C **Have mercy, O God.**

P For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray.

C **Have mercy, O God.**

P For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray.

C **Have mercy, O God.**

P For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound especially:

- The family and friends of Patricia Beth, sister-in-law of Linda Wadham
- The family and friends of Bill Rose, husband of Shirley LaFayette
- Mary Andrews (Welcome Center volunteer from St. Anthony's)
- Dawn Bench (Welcome Center volunteer)
- Jackie Brichacek (Nancy's sister-in-law)
- Jean Boothe (Grace soup kitchen supervisor)
- Hank Buehrens
- Andrew Calvert
- Pat Calvert
- Barb Caputo
- Holly Cummings
- Eric Dangerfield (Carolyn Reynold's boyfriend)

- Alyssa and Aaron Dell
- Connie, mother of Welcome Center volunteer

Lynda Eirich

- Gregory Foster
- Steve Gapko
- Shirleen Gulick
- Hatch family (Nancy and Hank's aunt)
- Sydney Houston
- David Kramer
- David Kristopeit (Nancy's brother-in-law)
- Dorothy Keuffer
- Dean O'Hanlon
- Carolyn Reynold's children Eddie, Santino, and Lytoshia
- Cynthia Schwartz (Norma's daughter)
- Marcia Swanson
- Joyce Swift
- Ruth Underwood (David Underwood's mom)
- Linda Wadham
- Florence and Jacqueline Walker (Carolyn's sisters)
- Dottie Watts
- Kristi Weiss (Rollie's daughter)
- Darlene (Vivienne's friend), that God console all who suffer, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

P For our neighborhood, for visitors joining us for the first time or returning, and for those absent from our assembly, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and sacrament, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

Other intercessions may be offered.

P We give you thanks for our new member Karen, whom you have drawn to yourself by the love of Jesus Christ and whom we have welcomed into this household of faith. Keep us close together in your Spirit, in the breaking of bread and the prayers, and in service to others. Let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

P In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us (*especially Antony and Pachomius, renewers of the church*), that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

P Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

C Amen.

PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEAL

OFFERING "We Give Thee but Thine Own" (ELW #686)

*1 We give thee but thine own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O Lord, from thee.*

OFFERING PRAYER

P Let us pray.

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.

C Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING. SONG "The Summons" (ELW #798) vv. 1 & 5

*1 "Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?"*

*Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?*

*Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?"*

*5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.*

*Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.*

*In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.*

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DIALOGUE & PREFACE

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations; in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son; and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (ELW p. 153)

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

Lord God of power and might:

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P Blessed are you, O holy God: you are the Life and Light of all. By your powerful word you created all things. Through the prophets you called your people to be a light to the nations.

Blessed are you for Jesus, your Son. He is your Light, shining in our darkness and revealing to us your mercy and might.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his preaching and healing, his dying and rising, and his promise to come again, we await that day when all the universe will rejoice in your holy and life-giving light.

By your Spirit bless us and this meal, that, refreshed with this heavenly food, we may be light for the world, revealing the brilliance of your Son. Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

C Amen

INVITATION TO LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

LORD'S PRAYER

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven:

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Beloved: here is bread; here is wine. Here is Jesus. Come and be fed.

COMMUNION SONG (ELW p. 154)

*Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us peace, grant us peace.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Let us pray.

Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name.

C Amen.

NOISY OFFERING

SENDING

BLESSING

P God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter + keep you in peace.

C Amen.

SENDING SONG "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise" (ELW #310) vv. 1 & 4

1 *Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise;
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar,
branch of royal David's stem
in thy birth at Bethlehem:
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.*

4 *Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
present in thy holy word;
grace to imitate thee now
and be pure, as pure art thou;
that we might become like thee*

*at thy great epiphany,
and may praise thee, ever blest,
God in flesh made manifest.*

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Pastoral Acts

DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Funeral: William B. Rose, January 16, 2021
Bill Rose and Shirley LaFayette married on
October 17, 2020.



Annual Congregational Meeting Slated February 7

It's time for Grace congregation's annual meeting very soon. Your church council has scheduled the meeting on Sunday, February 7 after the worship service.

As we have been doing during the COVID-19 health crisis, this meeting will be conducted on Zoom.

To join the Zoom Meeting on line, click at

<https://bit.ly/38Gkngn> . the passcode is: 7WfefC .

Since this web addresses is very complicated, we will post a link on our Facebook page and in the newsletter posts on our website.

You can also phone in at 646-876-9923. You will need to then enter the meeting ID and passcode. The meeting ID is 685 749 8173, and the passcode by

phone is 834854. (Note: You can skip the participant ID prompt by pressing the # key.)

Council members are asked to submit their annual reports to the church office by January 26. Copies of the annual report will be available in the church office and posted at www.gracekenosha.com before the meeting.

January List of Lauds

Lauds to Garriet Dreger for his continued work on Grace's heating and cooling system, including installing winter covers on the air conditioning units. Many thanks, Garriet!

Lauds to Patsy Callahan for keeping on top of our worship space, changing our paraments to reflect the changing seasons of the church year from Advent blue

to Christmas white to the green Sundays after Epiphany.

Lauds to St. Mary's Lutheran for their donation to the Welcome Center of several quilts!

Grace Receipts January 17, 2021

General offering	\$ 855.00
Benevolence.....	\$ 35.00
New Year	\$ 35.00
Initial offering	\$ 11.00
Infant Moses Ministry.....	\$ 10.00
Welcome Center / Food pantry.....	\$ 10.00
Non-member contributions:	
Non-designated.....	\$ 225.00
In honor of Gerry & Lois Glass	\$ 200.00
NA building use.....	\$ 40.00
Parking lot use.....	\$ 20.00

Minus banking fees.....	\$ (0.00)
Total	\$ 1,441.00
Grace weekly budget:	\$2,943.20

Notes: Nominal banking fees are charged on financial transactions made through DonorBox on Grace's web site.

Please remember to mail in your offering checks to Grace if you are not worshipping here in person. You can also contribute electronically through the "Donations" link at GraceKenosha.com.



Freezing for a Reason Food Drive starts on Monday! Please plan to bring food by so that Andy, Dominic, Joe, and Katy don't have to be out too long. They will be out until Thursday unless our library room is filled floor to ceiling with food.

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Erickson

January 7, 2021

Siblings in Christ:

Events of recent days have been incredibly hard and painful to watch. First, the decision by the Kenosha County District Attorney not to file charges against the officer who shot Jacob Blake seven times in August was widely anticipated and, for many, deeply disappointing.

While many feared a resurgence of the violent protests that took place following the shooting in August, it appears that the response has been mostly peaceful thus far. It is clear to me, however, that regardless of the decision whether or not to charge Officer Sheskey or take other actions against the individuals involved, we need to seriously reexamine how our police respond to tense situations, especially when people of color are involved.

We also need to dismantle the economic and social structures that perpetuate injustice and often lead to these confrontations. Structural racism is real, and, while its impact can

be fatal for those among us who are black and brown, it harms all of us.

Of course, the events in Washington, DC yesterday have quickly taken over the headlines and our attention. I found the images of people storming the halls of Congress, violently seeking to intimidate our nation's leaders, to be quite distressing.

That these acts were encouraged and fueled by words and actions of the President and his closest allies makes yesterday's events all the more troubling. Again, however, this should not surprise us; yesterday's events are the natural, logical continuation of the path that we have been on for quite some time.

As much as we may want to place the blame for the turmoil and unrest on specific individuals, we need to be clear that the path forward is not just about removing a few bad apples, and it's not about sawing off the diseased branch from the tree. We need to recognize that the very soil in which the tree is planted is toxic. Generations of

racism and greed have resulted in acts of violence and division that sicken our souls and poison our communities. Those who work with toxic soil will tell us that it is possible to reclaim the soil and heal the earth, but it takes commitment, time, and lots of hard work.

If we hope to participate in God's mission to reshape our world, our country, and our communities to more closely reflect God's reign of justice, love, and mercy, we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work. We need to learn how to speak with courage, love, and truth; we need to learn how to listen with humility and compassion; and those of us with power and privilege need to learn when to use it to make a difference and when to release it and get out of the way.

Through it all, I pray we will be grounded in faith, fueled by hope, and shaped by love. The road before us is long and filled with challenges and uncertainty, but God has not brought us this far to abandon us now.

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Special Synod Assembly to Meet Virtually January 23

On December 3, 2020, the Rev. Matthew Schlake-Kruse, Greater Milwaukee Synod Secretary, sent an official notice that Bishop Paul D. Erickson has called a Special Virtual Meeting of the Synod Assembly to be held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2021. This meeting will be conducted on the Zoom webinar platform, which will allow all participants to see and hear the proceedings and to speak to the assembly when recognized. Those without computer or smartphone access can call into the meeting on a telephone. The purposes of this Special Meeting (expected to last 60-90 minutes) are as follows:

- To recognize and receive Lakeside Lutheran Church as a congregation of the Greater Milwaukee Synod;
- To amend selected by-laws related to the structure of the Synod's clusters and conferences, as presented and approved by the Synod Council in November 2019; and
- To receive brief updates on the status of the Synod's ministries during the pandemic.



The proposed by-law changes would replace the current ten "mission clusters" in the Greater Milwaukee Synod with seven "conferences." Resulting changes in the Synod Council include increasing number of its at-large voting members from three to six.

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Erickson

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"Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

—Isaiah 43:16-19

In faith and hope,
Bishop Paul D. Erickson