

Go And... Pray

May 16th, 2024 Minutes

Go And Planning Team:

- Rev. Maristela Freiberg, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to Bishop
- Rev. Jay Berry, St. Mark's Oaklyn
- Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund, Messiah Oakland
- Rev. Danielle McCleary, St. Matthew Secaucus
- Lois Parrett, Abiding Presence Ewing and NJ Synod Staff
- Rev. Judy Anderson, St. Thomas Brick
- Rev. Dianne Lewis, Trinity Jersey City
- Rev. Menzi Nkambule, St. Matthew Jersey City
- Rev. Joe Graumann, St. Stephen Woodbury
- Jill Collict, Faith Hillsborough

Number of Participants: 20 (7:16 pm)

Welcome & Opening Prayer: Rev. Danielle McCleary

The Disciples Prayer by Rev. M Jade Kaiser from Enfleshed

Mother of us all,
who dwells within and beyond,
Sacred is your name.
May your holy vision for collective flourishing
come to fruition among us.
May your dreams of justice, love, compassion, and connection be enfleshed on earth.
Provide us today with what we need to be nourished in body, soul, and heart.
Forgive us for the harm we cause as we seek to forgive those who have harmed us.
Lead us away from everything that destroys and liberate us from the hands of evil.
For you are the ultimate source of hope.
Your power-with exceeds all power-over.
Your presence incites eternal wonder.
All praise to you, our comfort and strength.
Amen.

Introductions and Zoom Etiquette: Lois Parrett

- Please stay on mute
- Use the chat!
- It's helpful when you have your name on your Zoom screen so we know who you are

Dwelling in the Word: Psalm 23 Rev. Dianne Lewis

- Read 2x as you listen, read, and reflect on the words, discussion followed.

What does this psalm mean to you? How does it resonate with you or move you? How might you use this psalm as prayer in the future?

- Hearing this psalm as a back and forth conversation
- Forever: means forever, from creation on, not just on the other side of eternity
- Hearing this outside of a funeral helps you hear that it is not just for the dead, but also for the living. God is with you in your daily life.
- Hear it so often at a funeral that it's easy to tune out. Changing the context provides different meaning
- "He restores my soul" - envelopes every dark valley and no matter how much we mess up, God restores your soul and brings you back to wholeness in communion and full reconciliation with God
- "Darkest valleys" - grieving is one of the darkest valleys we walk, knowing God is there is so comforting
- "He makes me lie down" - it is good and holy to rest
- Image of God shepherding us, leading us in the right path, feeling God's presence with us "you are with me"
- Promise for the living "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"
- "Beside still waters" - this is how I feel when I pray, I feel a calm stillness with the water

Breakout Room Activity: Rev. Menzi Nkambule

What are you bringing to the table? What questions do you have?

- Really like the prayer booklet handed out at Synod Assembly - really good ideas
- How can we connect more with organizations in the community?
- Structured relationship building, a way we can come together and feel the presence of the Holy Spirit
- Bringing resources and tools to add to the conversation
- Hoping to have takeaways to bring to the congregation
- Excitement that people want to be in church and engage in community.
- Lot's of new folks coming to the table and bringing lots of curiosity and a desire to stay connected to the Synod
- Desire and willingness to do the work and the need for more practice and learning
- We each bring gifts to the church through our own ministry
- How can we show up where God needs us? Where does God need us?

Groundwork for Go And...: Revs. Courtney Smith Westerlund and Judy Anderson

- Reimagining how we invite people into relationship and share God's love
- Not your average exploration of evangelism - if you're looking for the same old same old, you won't get it here
 - If we had all the answers, we would be rich
 - Learning together, take what works and leave what doesn't
- Seeking to create a new framework and establishing new methods that go beyond knocking on doors
- Evangelism Defined

- Simple act of sharing the good news of God's love in Jesus and inviting others to trust in this love and join in God's work (ELCA website)
- Anything you do to help another person to move closer to a relationship with God or into Christian community (Martha Reese - Unbinding Your Heart)
- Framework and tools: working on building, expanding, and exploring relationships within your congregation and the community.
 - Radically relational
 - Connection and collaboration
 - Listening and learning
 - Inclusive and innovative
 - Equipping and empowering
- This is holy experimentation, we are trying something new and inviting you to listen and learn and implement what works for you. Then check back with us and let us know how it goes.
 - Take it. Leave it. Tweak it.
 - Experiment!!!
- All of this starts with prayer

Lead with Prayer: Rev. Jay Berry

- Prayer Book Resource from Synod Assembly - available on the website if you need a copy!
- "Pray first, not one thing can be done unless we pray first" - Bishop of Upstate New York
- Even pastors need to be reminded that we need to stop and pray first
- How would you describe your prayer life in one word?
 - Meh
 - Un-finished
 - Growing (slowly, but growing)
- There are lots of ways to pray, what works for one doesn't always work for others
- Prayer is a two-way conversation with God
- Prayer can also be intrusive and hands-on through laying on of hands, walking, coloring, while washing hands
- Can be short and pointed or long and intentional
- Even mowing the lawn can be a way to pray!
- There is no right or wrong way to pray, God just loves to hear from us, even if/when we don't use words

Announcements and Closing Devotion: Rev. Maristela Freiberg

- Next Go And...gathering held on June 20th @ 7:00pm
- Please note, we will open our zoom calls @6:45pm to answer any questions people may have and to catch up on Go And....stories
- Consider reading *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shame of the Church in our Time* by Alan J. Roxborough

- If you need a copy of the book, please contact Lois Parrett: lparrett@njsynod.org and we will send you a copy of it!
- You can join us for the conversation and be an active participant even if you do not read the book!

Resources:

Enfleshed: <https://enfleshed.com/>

- Free liturgy resources
- Opening Prayer for today came from here