

Go And... Love (your neighbor)

February 27, 2025 Minutes

Number of Participants: 17 at 7:08 pm

Opening Entertainment: How has your Star Word shown up in your life?

Welcome and Prayer: Rev. Dianne Lewis

- “A Prayer for the Church” from A Rhythm of Prayer by Sarah Bessey

Pulse Check: Lynn Perry

What word or phrase describes how you are feeling as you join us this evening?

- This practice is a great way to take stock of what each person is bringing to a meeting or gathering, while making space for the many and complicated emotions we all experience.

Dwelling in the Word: Rev. Menzi Nkambule

Luke 10:25-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

- What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
 - Mercy
 - Moved and acted with compassion
 - “The one who showed him mercy”
 - Disdain and compassion that feels so relevant to today
 - Love
 - Questions and half answers - opportunities to learn
 - One man’s suffering as a result of the robber’s actions
- How does Jesus respond, how are we invited to respond?
 - Go and do likewise
 - What do you read in the law → directing people to the law
 - Go And...
 - Jesus responds matter-of-factly
 - Gives us the ability to interpret
 - What is meant by eternal life?
- Participant sharing brought up the fact that this text feels very personal right now in our country where we are constantly “othering” one another.
- Quote for the Day: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But...the good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”

Defining Neighbor: Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund

How do you define a neighbor?

- All creatures great and small
- Whomever God places in my path

- Anyone i encounter in my path each day
- Another living person
- All of God's creation: people, plants, animals. We are called to be neighbors to all
- Someone near by
- All beings
- Life's companions
- Someone who crosses my path
- To see the face of God in everyone means all are neighbors
- I define neighbor as the whole world
- All who have need and all who have means are neighbors

Who is your neighbor?



Loving Our Neighbor: Rev. Sara Lilja

- One of Luther's favorite sermons, delivered in Wittenberg during the first week in Lent: God doesn't need your good works, but your neighbor does
 - It's not that we love our neighbor to impress God or one another
 - We love our neighbor because we have been loved by God and we are asked to share that love with those around us
 - The Pope said recently: the way you prove you love God is how you treat your neighbor
 - Doing good works is our response to the love we receive from God
- Loving our neighbor is a huge part of our call as followers of Jesus
 - This practice feels even more relevant as we enter into the season of Lent - rather than giving something up, we can take on a practice for Lent
- How do we take something on that can show the world God's abundance and love?
 - Loving our neighbor, caring for our neighbor, and showing empathy and compassion is an important practice we can do
 - There's science to prove that we ourselves are changed and mentally/physically better when we love and care for others

- What are the barriers we hold that prevent us from loving our neighbor? How can we address them to engage in the work anyway?

Breakout Group Discussion:

- How can you challenge yourself to love your neighbor this Lenten season?
- What keeps you from doing it?
 - Reactions and responses from other people against what you are doing (both loud and angry or calm and composed)
- Christ is hope and hope is always worth the risk

When we love our neighbor it addresses the evil forces in our world. We are called to speak and act with love while praying with our feet and our voices.

- Advocacy mentality around The Good Samaritan: why is that road so dangerous anyway? How can we make the road safer so no one else gets hurt.
- How do we as a community of faith work together to love our neighbor and support one another in this work?
 - We all need support and encouragement from one another
- We need both the response to the problem and asking the questions about why the problems are happening in the first place

Opportunities for Engagement: Revs. Danielle McCleary, Sarah Fryman, Sara Lilja

- Prayer: pray for one another
- Collections/Donations: how can you connect with those around you and respond to their individual and specific needs during this time?
- Connect with local agencies, groups, churches already doing this work
- Signing up for
 - Jersey Jottings - stay informed with what is going on in the Synod from congregations to ministry opportunities:
https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001q5ql0NDN5qM-5kNzaO0fSi9d_PKiY9R3F2FGQPbxhu5kK5_mfUvBwcsJliUkfMlfAkwpv45oOg8Rul7Gey--yUWbrOBmCNRIUaDotrcC082GmW2mKfoSug%3D%3D
 - LEAMNJ advocacy newsletter:
https://secure.everyaction.com/nKL_2zeFx0mInvq3c0xkvg2
 - Volunteer Matching Database: <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>
- Advocacy! This work is so important right now, let's work to address the issue instead of just responding to the problems.
 - Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry NJ <http://www.learnj.org/>
 - Get in touch with Pastor Sara Lilja: slilja@njsynod.org
- The Lightmakers Manifesto by Karen Walrond
<https://www.broadleafbooks.com/store/product/9781506469942/The-Lightmakers-Manifesto>
- A Rhythm of Prayer by Sarah Bessey
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/623423/a-rhythm-of-prayer-by-edited-by-sarah-bessey-with-amena-brown-barbara-brown-tayler-lisa-sharon-harper-and-more/>

Closing: Rev. Judy Anderson

Ideas for future topics you'd like to hear about:

- Finding joy
- Resting
- Joy as an act of resistance
- Meditation practices to take home
- Share
- Support
- Patience
- Go and Resist - The Nap Ministry shares napping as resisting capitalism
 - <https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/>
 - What are we called to resist?

Closing Prayer:

- "Prayer to Love the World Again" from A Rhythm of Prayer by Sarah Bessey

See you next month for Go and Rest as Resistance on March 20th at 7:00 pm

Go And Planning Team:

- Rev. Maristela Freiberg, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to Bishop
- 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
- Rev. Sarah Fryman, Grace Bayonne
- Lynn Perry, Grace Mendham