

September 1st, 2020

Politics and Religion, two things you should never talk about in polite company. Or so we have been told. But events in society have a way of pushing normal convention aside and demanding new ways to progress. August is gone, September is here, the calendar says we should be going back to school, and yet we are still dealing with the same things we began the summer with.

This message was going to be about COVID-19, the changes it has made to our lives and how we are working to get back into a “normal” situation both at home and church. Everyone is still occupied with those tasks, though I would guess you are as tired of reading about COVID issues as I am talking about them.

So instead of COVID you get politics. The two parties had “virtual” conventions over the past few weeks and had the usual speeches saying we could do better, and they will do worse. After a few of them they all begin to sound the same. It reminds me of Gail and I discussing whether to use fabric softener in the washer or in the dryer, or whether in the dishwasher the forks point up and the knives down. At the end of the day the clothes and dishes get cleaned either way.

During these eight days of photo ops and speeches, Portland passed its 90th night of protests, Louisiana was hit by another hurricane and seven shots sparked violence in Wisconsin, prompting a sports boycott/strike. This past weekend two notable black men died. These two gentlemen brought joy and inspiration to millions doing what they loved. One was an actor who played such historical figures as Jackie Robinson, James Brown and Thurgood Marshall in addition to the Marvel superhero Black Panther. The other played the game of basketball he loved from childhood to college leading to a professional career that spanned 18 seasons, winning the Sixth Man of the Year award and becoming an NBA all-star. Each man credited mentors during their school years who guided them and helped them achieve their goals in life.

These deaths over last weekend remind us of the fragility of human life. While it is important to stay informed of events going on around the nation and the world, it is paramount that we care for each of our congregation and community health needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The Salem-Keizer School District is starting the fall term not by returning to the classrooms but through remote distance learning. This adds some complications about how the school day/week will shape up and as Loran mentioned last week there will be opportunities for service. Do we have the

resources and abilities to assist? Is space available or do we need to reserve it for ourselves and other building tenants?

We will be worshipping back inside our building soon; the fall Oregon weather will see to that. Several of us have enjoyed the summer courtyard church as an example of what service may look like when we move back inside. Caring for each other's safety remains our primary goal. Spacing will be a key factor and we need to find ways that allow us to catch up with what is going in our lives without passing the peace, coffee hour and other things limited by social distancing.

So, I ask you to have coffee at home, sit on your deck, patio or dinner table and discuss the many changes and new opportunities that God is placing before us. What do the events of 2020 call you to do? Let Pastor and your council know your thoughts. Feel free to call me with your concerns. To paraphrase an old political slogan, "It's Morning in America", so what are we going to do today?

Bryan Struve, President

Christmas Eve Sermon – Dec 24, 2019 Pastor Patricia Hughes/Holy Cross Lutheran Church
(Bishop Emeritus Dave Brauer-Rieke is recording a sermon for on youtube, but no manuscript was available. So, here's an old favorite of mine for those of you who read the sermon weekly)

And so this is Christmas

And what have you done

Another year over

And a new one just begun Where were you last Christmas and what has happened in your life and in the life of the world, since then? Since last Christmas, I have made my first trip to Israel, and seen up close some of the pivotal places in the narrative of Jesus. Bethlehem, that divided city, where 3 christian groups maintain the Church of the Nativity – Armenian, Catholic and Orthodox, because neither group trusts the others to do a good job if they are not watching. And don't get me started on Bethlehem itself, cut off from Jerusalem, just a couple miles away by a gigantic wall which divides the haves from the have nots. Seeing these sights was a hard reality for me, who knows the biblical narratives so well, to find that the divided, politically charged climate of the time of Jesus is quite similar to the current reality in Palestine, the dividing lines between ethnicities, belief, and politics are everywhere. And it makes me sad. Also Since last Christmas, I've spent a week with my uncle and aunt in Colorado at their cabin. There just never seemed to be time to do that, when my dad was dying by inches of Alzheimer's these last 4 years, and before that, my mother struggling with kidney failure.

How is the world different for you this Christmas than last year? Who has died, what hard realities have you faced, what new division has emerged in your own world, and the larger one you inhabit?

And so this is Christmas Every year since I've been your pastor, I read the account of Jesus' birth from Luke. There's another one in Matthew, and a very different perspective in John, but Luke is the one I always choose. Because Luke is a tapestry maker, or a quilt designer, or a wood burner – you know what I mean he is an artist like so many of you are artists in one medium or another. Luke's words paint us a picture of that amazing moment in time when Jesus came into the world. He starts this chapter with the political realities – Augustus is the emperor, and Quirinis is the governor and the entire population has been forced to set out and be registered. Not so different from our time, when the political realities are part of each of our lives, from national decisions on taxation and border practices, to local choices to 'weed out' homeless camps during Christmas week. The Luke narrative focuses on people on the margins – shepherds keeping watch by night – folks on the fringes of polite society who are the only invited guests to the birth of Christ. In our own time, the number of people on the margins seems to increase, and yet the God of love invites them in as freely as imaginable. The couple – Mary and Joseph, who lay the newborn king in a manger because there is no room for them inside the inn with the respectable people.

How is the world different for us all this Christmas? In so many ways and then again so few. This world continues to bring challenges, and struggle. We yearn to be caring and equitable to all, and yet trip on our own feet so often in the journey.

And so this is Christmas

The issue is mercy. God shows mercy to you and to me, in this person of Jesus, born in a manger. All those generations in the Bible who tried so hard to do God's will, and draw near to God find out that they and we will never get there on our own. We need God's mercy. Just to put one foot in front of the other. And So God's mercy comes to us, in a little child. Undeserved. Unexpected. Unforgettable. And so this is Christmas my friends. God's mercy. For you experience. For you to Share. Amen.

Praying together at Holy Cross – Sept 6, 2020

This summer, we are ‘searching for significance’ in this life of faith. When the world is full of change, we could choose to ‘lay low’ and wait for things to blow over. Or we could search for our own significance as the Body of Christ. We pray, Lord, for your help and guidance as we journey together toward that goal.



Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

We pray for those in leadership in our country, our state and our cities. May God sustain them and continue to point them to compassionate, quick and well-informed response.

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

We pray for those struggling with worry and anxiety in these unusual days. Be our strength.*(specific people are mentioned here)*

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

We pray for all those involved in education, that they will stay healthy and focused on learning. *(specific people are mentioned here)*

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

We pray for communities and cities who struggle to care for the needy and offer opportunity to all. *(specific people are mentioned here)*

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

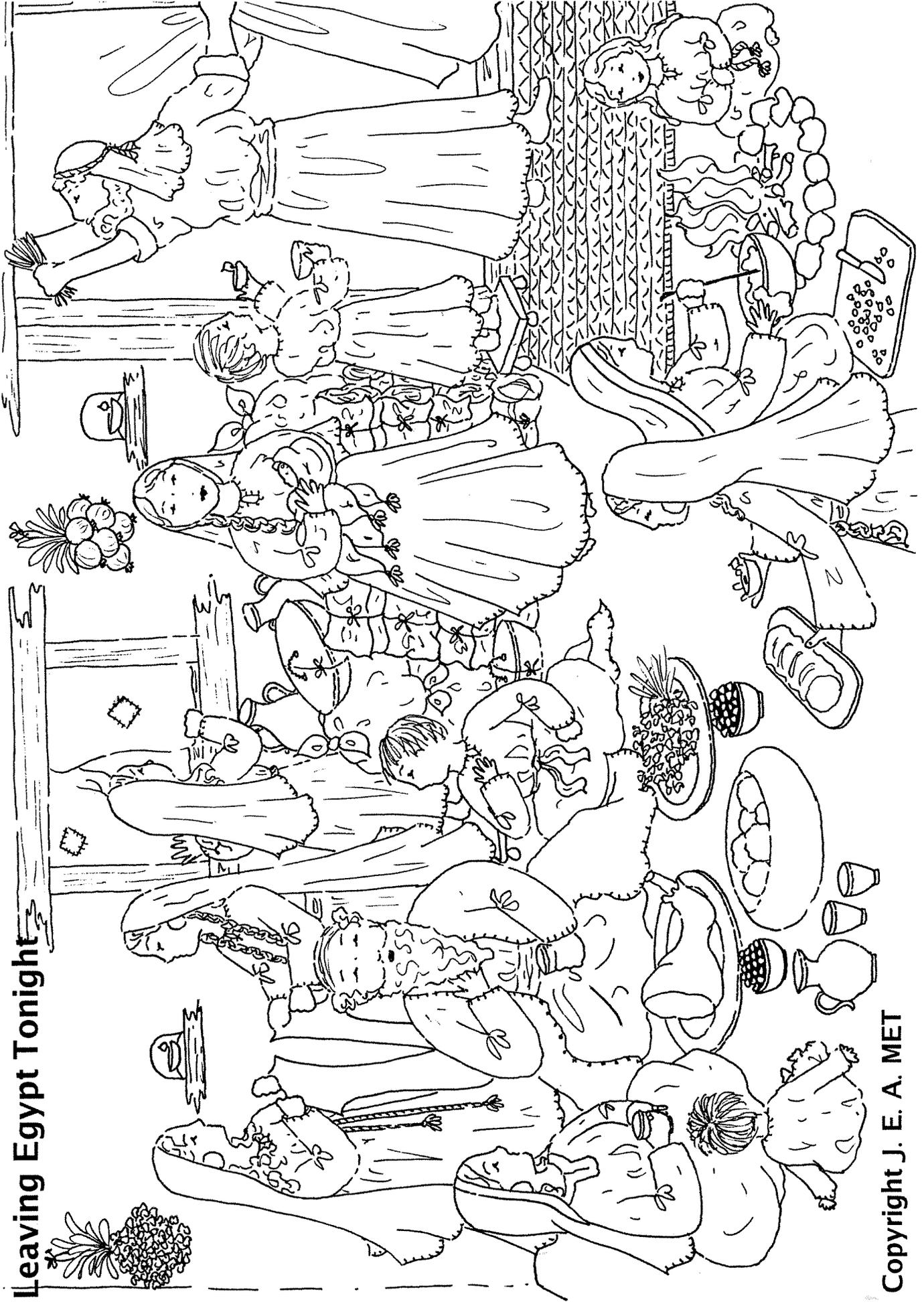
We pray for all who are involved in being church today – give us Your vision of new things.. *(specific people are mentioned here)*

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

For this and all those matters, circumstances and individuals whose needs are brought to mind at this time. *(specific people are mentioned here)*

Lord, in your mercy Hear Our Prayer

We pray for Holy Cross leadership as they imagine new ways of being of service in your community, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for loving us. It is what makes all the difference. Amen.



Leaving Egypt Tonight

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WORSHIPPING AT HOME WITH HOLY CROSS
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020 – FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen.

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

**We place our hope in ourselves
and rely on our own efforts.**

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

**We fear difference and do not welcome others
as you have welcomed us.**

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us;

through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven.

Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN – Built on a Rock

1 Built on a rock the church shall stand,
even when steeples are falling;
crumbled have spires in ev'ry land,
bells still are chiming and calling—
calling the young and old to rest,
calling the souls of those distressed,

longing for life everlasting.

- 3 Christ builds a house of living stones:
we are his own habitation;
he fills our hearts, his humble thrones,
granting us life and salvation.
Where two or three will seek his face,
he in their midst will show his grace,
blessings upon them bestowing.
- 4 Yet in this house, an earthly frame,
Jesus the children is blessing;
hither we come to praise his name,
faith in our Savior confessing.
Jesus to us his Spirit sent,
making with us his covenant,
granting his children the kingdom.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

READINGS AND PSALM

Exodus 12:1-14

The passover of the LORD

Psalms 119:33-40

I desire the path of your commandments. (Ps. 119:35)

Romans 13:8-14

Live honorably as in the day

Matthew 18:15-20

Reconciliation in the community of faith

APOSTLES' CREED

**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.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (see attached prayers)

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth,
all creation is yours,
and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
Water and word, wine and bread:
these are signs of your abundant grace.
Nourish us through these gifts,
that we might proclaim your steadfast love
in our communities and in the world,
through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

When our congregation gathered for the celebration of Holy Communion, we heard again the story of God's mighty acts and of the love shown us in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. With thanksgiving we remembered that "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 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 all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

The people of our congregation were given assurance of our Lord's presence through the gift of his Holy Spirit. As you worship in your homes, we remember the gift of communion that we share.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

At this time, you may remember the gift of holy communion with your own bread and cup.

Communion Blessing The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen**

COMMUNION BLESSING

God of the welcome table,
in this meal we have feasted on your goodness
and have been united by your presence among us.
Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts
so that we may share your neighborly love with all,
through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

BLESSING

**LIFE IS SHORT
AND WE DO NOT HAVE
MUCH TIME TO
GLADDEN
THE HEARTS
OF THOSE WHO
TRAVEL WITH US
SO BE SWIFT TO LOVE
MAKE HASTE TO BE KIND
AND GO IN PEACE
TO LOVE AND SERVE
THE LORD**

ALAN FREDERIC AMIEL