

## *Faith Lutheran Church*

*Sunday, June 7, 2020*

*The Holy Trinity*



### *Call to Worship*

We gather together in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### *Prayer of Confession* (please join in the Confession)

**God of grace, love, and communion, we confess that we have failed to love You with all our heart, soul, and mind; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We ignore Your commandments, stray from Your way, and follow other gods. Have mercy on us. Forgive our sin and raise us to new life that we may serve You faithfully and give honor to Your holy name.**

(<https://bookoforder.info/Book-of-Common-Worship.pdf>)

### *Declaration of Forgiveness*

Hear the good news! In baptism, you were buried with Christ. In baptism also you were raised to life with Him, through faith in the power of God who raised Christ from the dead. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ+, you are forgiven. **Amen.**

(<https://bookoforder.info/Book-of-Common-Worship.pdf>)

### *Opening Prayer*

Please join me in prayer:

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship Your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise Your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into Your presence, where You live in endless joy and love, Father, Son+, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** (from *The Holy Trinity*, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

### *Readings and Psalm*

- **Genesis 1:1--2:4a**                      *The creation of the heavens and the earth*
- **Psalm 8**                                      *How majestic is your name in all the earth! (Ps. 8:1)*
- **2 Corinthians 13:11-13**              *Paul's farewell to the church at Corinth*
- **Matthew 28:16-20**                      *Living in the community of the Trinity*

### ***The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, 28:16-20***

*After his resurrection, Jesus summons his remaining disciples and commissions them to baptize and teach all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in

heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>)

### Sermon

**I greet you with grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And I pray: Lord, help me speak words of peace and hope and love today. Amen.**

And then I ask, how? How can I speak words of peace and hope and love when the world is in chaos? When so many people are dying because of the color of their skin? When there is such disregard for human life? When voices are silenced? When fathers and mothers don't come home because they've been murdered, even at the hands of those who are sworn to protect? When we are a nation divided; politically, racially, economically, and spiritually?

How do I speak words of peace and hope and love today?

In our country of roughly 317 million people, about 14% are black. Last Monday, Memorial Day, May 25<sup>th</sup>, that number was painfully reduced by one.

George Floyd.

The events from last week which have carried over into this week have shaken us to the core. Horror and outrage across the country and the world continue as the video showing George's murder plays over and over on the news. A Minneapolis police officer with his knee pressed on the neck of George Floyd. Three other officers who refuse to stop him.

“I can't breathe.” Those are the words we hear from George Floyd. “I can't breathe.” At 9:25 pm, on May 25<sup>th</sup>, George Floyd died.

You've seen the video. We all have. We all heard his cries for help. We all heard the bystanders begging the officer to stop and for the other officers to intervene. And yet, George Floyd died.

My sermon for last Sunday was finished on that Wednesday afternoon. It was emailed to the staff of my three churches, ready to be copied and mailed Thursday morning. After George's murder on Monday. And after the peaceful protests on Tuesday. I certainly didn't know what was going to happen next. I don't know who could have predicted what would happen next.

Because you see, Wednesday evening everything changed. The protests turned violent. Buildings were looted and burned. Chaos erupted in the streets. People and law enforcement releasing violent anger on each other. Again, you've seen the videos. You've listened to the news.

In last week's sermon, after George's murder, I said that we've seen “blatant acts of injustice towards God's people. The same people God calls us to love. Our neighbor.” And I posed the question, “Is this how God wants us to treat one another and how we show our love for each other?”

Yes, more questions to answer. Not only, “how can I speak words of peace and hope and love today” but also, “Is this how God wants us to treat one another AND how we show our love for each other?”

Huge questions that must be answered. Huge questions that also require us to look at ourselves and finally take a stand.

Black Lives Matter. But you may ask, “don’t All Lives Matter?”

A colleague of mine shared this:

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Samaritan lives matter.”**

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Children’s lives matter.”**

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Gentile lives matter.”**

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Jewish lives matter.”**

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Women’s lives matter.”**

**Instead of saying all lives matter, Jesus said, “Lepers’ lives matter.”**

My colleague’s comment continued: **“Even though Jesus loves everyone, even to the point of dying for their sins, He went out of His way to intentionally help specific groups of people – the alienated, mistreated, and those facing injustice.**

**“So, saying “Black Lives Matter” and participating in a movement seeking justice, positive reform, and empowerment is one of the most Christ-like things we can do.”**

As a white pastor, I have also said, “All Lives Matter.” They do. But, as my colleague shared, there are specific groups of God’s children that we must stand up for. This doesn’t mean that we care for anyone less. It means that we have a privilege that others don’t because of their race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, or religion.

I was recently confronted about my white privilege by a black sister in Christ, Rhonda. Words that I used caused her pain and, for that, I apologized.

What I’ve learned is that white privilege doesn’t mean your life hasn’t been hard; it means your skin color isn’t one of the things making it harder. White privilege means you can go into any store and not think twice that you will be followed by security because of the color of your skin. White privilege means people won’t make assumptions about your intelligence because of the color of your skin. White privilege means you won’t be denied a position in a company or receive equal pay because of the color of your skin. Even though this is illegal, it still happens.

I was born into a white family. That is nothing I am ashamed of or can change. But that doesn’t dismiss the need for me to speak out for those whose voice is often silenced.

For those who remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speeches and marches, many assumed that was the end of racism. It certainly wasn’t. Racism is still so prevalent in our culture today and yet, for some reason, rarely comes to light until someone’s actions become too egregious to silence. Or are caught on video.

There is a picture being circulated on social media that shows Dr. King walking arm-in-arm with Coretta Scott King and other civil rights marchers with the caption, “This Is A Protest” atop a picture of recent looting in Minneapolis which reads, “This Is A Crime.” Justine Tinley, writer for The Undeclared, an online platform for exploring the intersections of race, sports, and culture, wrote, “This is all while the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and Floyd, at the hands of policemen and vigilantes, held black America’s consciousness hostage. In the midst of a pandemic claiming over 100,000 American lives, with a special perversion for black life. The comparison isn’t just historically inaccurate. The meme further paints the human rights icon in a light that is, at best, a disrespectful attempt at respectability politics. At worst, it plays into the conservative misdirection of who King was and what he stood for.

Dr. King’s daughter, Bernice King, tweeted, “It would be great if folks were as zealous about evoking my father to eradicate racism as they are about evoking him to criticize how people respond to racism.”

One must look at the backstory as to what led Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to become the voice for the black people. Blood was shed. Lives were lost. That peaceful-looking picture doesn’t tell the whole story. That peaceful-looking picture doesn’t tell about the historical trauma from hundreds of years of slavery, captivity, and brutality perpetrated against black men, women, and children.

Let me be clear. Some individuals and groups have taken advantage of people’s anger and actions and destroyed other’s property. This is never acceptable. This is never condoned. People’s lives have already been affected because of the pandemic. People are out of work. Household income is reduced. And now business owners must decide if they will rebuild. Vital infrastructure buildings were destroyed.

Lootings must stop. Killings must stop. All cops are not bad cops. All blacks are not bad people. All whites are not white supremacist. The conversations need to start where they haven’t started and continue where they have been ongoing.

We have to do better. And I’m including myself in that.

A brother in Christ, The Rev. Kader El-Yateem, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for the South Region at [Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA](#), recently said, “We need to repent and ask for forgiveness from our brothers and sisters in the black and brown communities. We need to repent and ask for forgiveness from all those who suffer racism and discrimination in America. We need to repent and ask for forgiveness for allowing privilege, especially white privilege, to dehumanize others. We need to repent and ask for forgiveness for staying silent and not raising our voices to fight injustice. Come on friends, be of courage and make a difference. The world needs you.”

So, how do we speak words of peace and hope and love? We read scripture. We listen to God.

In Micah 6:8 we hear,

<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

Do justice through peaceful protests, with our actions and words, for our black sisters and brothers. Love everyone. Be kind to your neighbor. And walk humbly with God.

Despite all the anger and hate and destruction, there has been a tremendous amount of love shown since the death of George Floyd. Communities gather to clean up the aftermath of the destruction. People donate food to those whose grocery stores were burned to the ground. Medical supplies pour in to help those injured. Law enforcement and military personnel hug, kneel, and stand hand-in-hand, arm-in-arm with protestors. These are the signs of hope.

As sisters and brothers in Christ, if we speak out towards hate with hate, we accomplish nothing. If we speak out towards racism with racism, we accomplish nothing. We must have compassion in our words. We must have love in our hearts. That love comes from our relationship with Christ.

In John 13, Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Though we should never forget the murder of George Floyd on May 25<sup>th</sup> and what followed, we must find the language to unite us in peace. Let us follow Christ's commandment. Let us treat one another in love, with hope, and in peace. And may we do so on this Trinity Sunday in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *A brief silence.*

God of community, You form us as Your church. Guide our bishops, pastors, deacons, and all the baptized in sharing Your life-giving good news with all the world. Strengthen us to be bold in our proclamation.

God of creation, You called everything into being. Sustain this world with Your renewing care. Inspire us to see waterways, plant life, birds, fish, insects, and mammals and call them good.

God of counsel, all authority belongs to You. Encourage the leaders of this and every land to seek peace, equality, and unity. Instill wisdom in advocates who work toward justice in often-ignored communities. Wipe out racism and hatred. Fill us with peace and hope and love so that we may treat all people as our sisters and brothers.

God of care, You created us in Your image. Help us see Your likeness in one another. Open our eyes to see and attend to all who face oppression and suffering. Console, heal and nourish all in need.

God of comfort, You are the great healer of all. Bring healing to all affected by the coronavirus. Give comfort and relief to all who suffer in any way; in body, mind, and spirit, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices....(please name your prayer concerns).

God of companionship, You accompany this body of faith. As the rhythms of summer begin, protect all who travel, renew all who will enjoy a time of sabbath, and shelter all who will not be protected from the sun's heat.

God of calm, we pray for Called-Pastor Rita Chirala and her son, Derrick, patiently waiting until the time they can join the faithful members of Faith Lutheran Church in the Soo. We pray the government can safely return to work soon so that her religious worker visa is processed without more delay.

God of compassion, You comfort us in our grief with the promise of the resurrection. We give You thanks for the saints of all time and in our lives.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(prayers from The Holy Trinity, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

**Our Lord's Prayer**

***I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught 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**

**Offering**

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

**Offertory Prayer**

**Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what You have first given us-our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of Your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of Him, who offered Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Do good to others. Christ is with you!

**Thanks be to God!**