



Compassionate. Challenging. Inclusive.

Monthly Newsletter

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Connecting With One Another

by Pastor Katy

It has been nearly four years since the COVID pandemic began. While we have learned much about sensible precautions – wearing a mask when you’re not feeling well or just staying home when you’re sick, keeping up with vaccinations, washing your hands regularly – it’s also worth holding gratitude that the widespread emergency phase is over. It’s also worth remembering that some of us will always need to be extra cautious about our health.

But as much as I hesitate to start off your new year with troubling news, it turns out that there is another epidemic among us. This particular epidemic has significant health implications: it contributes to a 29% increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults. It raises the risk of premature death by more than 60%, and substantially raises the level of mental health challenges, particularly depression. Approximately half of

the adults in the U.S. report suffering from this pandemic, and the rates are even higher for young people. And so, in the spring of last year, citing all of this evidence and much more, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy declared the newest epidemic among us: loneliness and isolation.

Yes, isolation and loneliness have all of the measurable health impacts you just read. That means that isolation and loneliness impact our health care system, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, our faith communities, and our homes. No human life is exempt from this epidemic, because even those who aren’t lonely are surrounded by so many people who are. Since this epidemic is so widespread, every organization out there needs to develop creative and persistent ways to help us build and maintain connections with each other: it will make for better workplaces, better school systems, better neighborhoods.

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At Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

We believe we are called by the Holy Spirit to proclaim and embody the compassionate, challenging, and inclusive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 28 at 12:15 pm

Your participation and voice is vital to the life and ministry of the congregation. Please plan to attend. Lunch will be served. Childcare will be available (after lunch).

Pastor's Letter (continued)

But as a community of faith, this epidemic is one we particularly ought to care about and work to change. The good news is, we have all kinds of experience with exactly the treatment required: this time, we don't need specialized medicine or tests to see if we are contagious. There's no required vaccine, and we definitely don't need to stay home. The treatment, writes Dr. Murthy, is readily available: "our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hidden in plain sight." The medicine is right in front of us: connection to one another.

Right from the beginning of scripture, human connection is named holy and necessary. "It is not good for the human to be alone," says God in Genesis 2 – leading God to form all the creatures of the earth as possible companions until God creates another human and a true companionship is born.

As an introvert, I can say that sometimes it actually is good to be alone, but I suspect what God was really saying is that it's not good to be *lonely*. We need one another. We need the messiness and imperfection of relationships. We need to practice talking about hard things, and forgiving one another when we mess up. We need real-life experience with others so we remember that all people are made in the image of God, not just the people who look and think and act like us. We need hugs and handshakes and pats on the back (provided there is consent for all those things), because love is made flesh in our own bodies and the bodies of others.

This means that every single time we make a connection with another person we are engaging in holy work. Every act of friendship is medicine for a hurting world. Every moment of kindness is a vaccination against a deadly disease. Faith communities need to embrace this work as the critical work it is, because we are communities of salvation. Do you know the other way to translate the word, "salvation?" It's "healing". When the bible talks about salvation, it isn't just referring to life after we die, but the healing we get to be a part of right now. In our time, right now, healing looks like relationship.

Dr. Murthy has a prescription for us. It's called the "Five for Five Challenge". For five days, you are asked to take five actions, one action each day, that give the experience of connection. It can come in one of three forms. You can either **express gratitude** to someone, you can **extend support** to someone, or you can **ask for help**.

If you're still looking for a New Year's Resolution, how about this one? Once a day, for five days, do one of these three things: express gratitude, extend support, or ask for help. It will change you. It will change others. It will be God made flesh in you. It will heal. It's what we all need.

Pastor Katy

Women's Retreat Friday, February 2nd through Sunday, February 4th at Rainbow Lodge in North Bend

Join us for the annual 2024 HSLC Women's Retreat, February 2nd-4th at Rainbow Lodge in North Bend. Cost for the full weekend is \$250 for double occupancy, \$300 for your own room (limited availability), and \$100 if you want to just come for the day on Saturday. There'll be fun, fellowship, plus time to reconnect with one another and celebrate the beauty of creation (even in February!) Scholarships are also available. To register, visit our website (hslckirkland.org) under Programs. Questions? Contact Pastor Katy at pastorkaty@hslckirkland.org.

Oasis Youth Group—Mocha Mondays Return

Mondays (when school is in session) | 3:00 - 4:00 pm

Enjoy coffee and conversation every Monday afternoon (when there's school) at the Juanita Village Starbucks (the one with the dome). Danielle Dadashi buys the drinks - you just come and join her. Questions? Contact Danielle at youth@hslckirkland.org.

MOCHA MONDAYS



Confirmation 2024

Sunday, February 4th | during 11:00 am service

The Confirmation Service for the Class of 2024 is scheduled for Sunday, February 4th, during the 11:00 am service. If that sounds earlier than usual to you, you are correct. In the past several years, most school districts have moved 9th grade to the high schools, so the lives of the youth have gotten increasingly busy during their 9th grade year. In an effort to meet the 9th graders where they are and to provide as much support as we can during this transition from middle school to high school, we have decided to shorten the 9th grade Confirmation year. More information to come about this year's Confirmation class in next month's newsletter - stay tuned! Questions? Contact Tammie Zarfos at confirmation@hslckirkland.org.

Middle School Ice Skating

Sunday, January 14th beginning at 12:30 pm

More information coming soon! Watch the website and announcements for details, but be sure and mark your calendars now!



Scholarship Opportunity

Members and friends of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church who are pursuing seminary education, are enrolled at an ELCA Lutheran seminary, or are enrolled at an ELCA-affiliated college or university are invited to apply for the Bruce Paul Hauge Memorial Scholarship. Applications are accepted beginning January 1, 2024 and due no later than April 30, 2024 to the Holy Spirit church office.

Applications are available from the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church office. Awards to eligible applicants will be made by May 30, 2024.

HSLC Week at Holden Village

July 7th-13th

If you're thinking about going to Holden Village in Summer of 2024 and would like to go with folks from Holy Spirit, plan to go the week of July 7th-13th. Holden Village is a remote wilderness community, rooted in the Lutheran tradition, that welcomes all people into the North Cascade Mountains, above Lake Chelan, Washington. It's a great getaway for people of all ages. Scholarships are available on the Holden Village website. Registration opens on January 2nd, and fills up fast! For more information, visit holdenvillage.org. Hope to see you there!



A Ukrainian mother reflects.... from the Refugee Resettlement Committee

In July of 2022, the HSLC Refugee Committee helped a family from the Ukraine settle into their new apartment in the south Everett area. Here is a little bit about what this journey has been like and how their children are doing. Here is what the mother said (through a translation app):

My children are now 13, 11, 4 and 3. I am glad that they have new friends here, have already settled into school, understand their teachers and, though not perfectly, can speak English at a good level. They take part in the life of the church, sing in the children's choir, and attend children's and youth ministry.

We were very worried...about how we should start our life from scratch in a new country. We prayed a lot and asked God for arrangements and help. We lived with family for two months and signed a lease for an apartment and realized it was completely empty. But the committee of the Lutheran church took care of everything and brought us necessary furniture, everything for the kitchen, and toys and briefcases with school supplies. Even food was brought.

It was so touching that we cried out of joy and gratitude to God and the people who helped us...May the Lord bless all committee members and their families. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless America and grant peace to Ukraine.

Thank you for your support that helps families like these!



Great Decisions 2024 begins Monday, January 8th | 7:00 pm

Once again, HSLC is offering the Great Decisions study program from the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). We meet to discuss major foreign policy issues facing our nation and world today and how this informs our faith. In the 1995 ELCA Social Statement "For Peace in God's World", we are reminded of our role as Christians to advocate for peace, and one way to do that is to become more educated in issues that affect our world. For more information on this statement, visit the Social Statements section of the ELCA website (ELCA.org).

For more than 100 years, the FPA's mission is to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding, and informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy and global issues. Through its balanced, nonpartisan programs and publications, the FPA encourages citizens to participate in the foreign policy process.

The 8 sessions will be held on Mondays at 7:00 pm beginning January 8th. Briefing books are on order at the discounted price of \$25.00 per book. This year's topics are Mideast realignment, climate technology, science across borders, US-China trade, NATO, Indonesia, high seas treaties, and pandemic preparedness.

To sign up, visit hslckirkland.org/great-decisions. If you have any questions, contact Susan Baird-Joshi (sdbj.thunderbird@gmail.com) or Mary-Alyce Burleigh (maryburl@comcast.net).

Sign up for Flowers!

The 2024 Flower Signup Chart is now available on the kiosk in the narthex. You are invited to sign up (in person or by contacting the church office) to provide flowers for our Sunday worship services between now and the end of 2024. If there is a special designation (such as an anniversary), please note that as well. You may bring flowers from your garden in a vase from home, or order a bouquet from a local florist or grocery store. Please take them home after worship on that Sunday.



Parents of Adults with Disabilities - Support Group every third Saturday from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, starting January 20th

What is it? This group will provide connection and mutual help for those whose parenting includes significant, lifelong care and care plans for their adult offspring.

Why come? It is easy to drift into isolation with the combination of extra tasks and cumulative losses. The group encourages friendly support through our shared perspectives. We will exchange resources, as appropriate.

Group Format: This will be a facilitated group, led by a social worker, who is also parenting an adult with painful and disabling medical conditions. We will together decide on what will be meaningful to us as topics.

What it is not: This is not a forum for alternative remedies, cures, or formulae for "faith healing." Email lists may not be shared for marketing purposes.

Where and When: Meetings will be every third Saturday from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, starting January 20th

Register: hslckirkland.org/pad-support-group-signup

Questions? Contact Deb MacKenzie at nurturingattachments@gmail.com.



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Worship on Sundays - 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 AM

Childcare available at 9:30 am and 11:00 am

Livestreaming at 9:30 am

Go Paperless!

If you'd like to reduce waste and not receive a paper copy of this monthly newsletter, please let us know. A digital copy of this monthly newsletter comes out with our weekly enews updates, and is also available via our website. Contact office@hslckirkland.org to update your communication preferences. Thank you!