



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

April 2024



THE LORD'S PRAYER

So, I am gearing up to offer an adult education opportunity between services the first three weeks of May. I am intending to teach on the topic of "Liturgy." With that in mind, I thought I would prepare you all for that with a little study on an important element of our liturgy, the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,

- Notice the plural pronoun 'our,' this is a communal prayer
- The term for "Father" (*abba*) is an informal one (vs. the more typical *pater*), we are privileged to be invited to address God in such an intimate way
- God is not tame or domesticated, rather our God is great, powerful, and awesome, hence "in heaven"

Hallowed be your name...

- The Greek form of these verbs (and the two petitions that follow) indicate that we are praying that God act as God should act and enable us to act as we should act
- God's name is holy, so holy that in Hebrew it is unpronounceable (YHWH), we are invited to ponder the sacred

Your kingdom come...

- Jesus often spoke about the kingdom of God, it was an important piece of his preaching
- God's kingdom has come, but it is not yet complete ("already but not yet")

- This petition is an acknowledgment of our dependence on God; the kingdoms humans set up are not good or just, we need God's kingdom
- The way of God is a way of love, justice, and mercy; that is what we pray will come

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

- What is God's will? We can look to the 10 Commandments, the teachings of Christ, even Micah 6:8, "[God] 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?"
- God's will is just: deliverance to the oppressed and judgment on the oppressor
- God's will is that we live in relationship with God
- God's will is evangelism, speaking and living God's love for the world

Give us today our daily bread.

- Notice the plural pronoun 'our' again, we pray that we and all creatures have daily bread
- This petition acknowledges that God is the source of all that we need
- God provides abundantly for all of creation, but we aren't very good at distribution
- Daily bread means all that we need for life, security, and health
- We also pray to be fed spiritually

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

- The Greek for sins (esp. in Matthew) literally means 'debts'; we are indebted to God and our neighbors
- We forgive as a grateful response to God's forgiving of us

- Jesus frequently preached on the importance of relationships
- Jesus forgave even those who didn't ask for it (let alone deserved it), and calls his disciples to do the same

Save us from the time of trial...

- Does God lead us into trial or sin? In a world where God's name is not hallowed, God's kingdom is not yet come, and God's will is not done, there exists evil to tempt us
- Once again, we have a plural pronoun ("us"), we are not in this alone
- The Lord's prayer is for ordinary, broken human beings...it's for all who sin
- In this petition we also pray for faithfulness in difficult times and circumstances

And deliver us from evil.

- The powers of evil in the world are real and present (racism, sexism, ageism, classism, nationalism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, etc.)
- In this petition we pray for the grace to stand against evil

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

- Matthew and Luke do not include these words (they were likely added to the Lord's Prayer by the early church)
- These words could come from 1 Chronicles 29:11 and Daniel 2:37
- This was a seditious thing to say in the first centuries of the church's existence under the Roman Empire
- We are acknowledging that the powers that be are not the LORD, God is LORD

Amen.

- This is a Hebrew word that carries a sense of certainty and finality
- It is most often translated as 'so be it'

For more study of this important prayer, consider reading "40 Days with the Lord's Prayer" by Henry French (or, of course, [Luther's Small](#) and [Large Catechism!](#)).

In Christ,
Pastor Jon

CONGREGATION COUNCIL



Our March meeting was held on March 12, 2024.

In attendance: Pastor Jon Nelson, Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt, Sandy Croushore, Julie Meeks, Jeffery Berry, Pam Buckley, Paul Reier, J.R. Lyons, Corey Knestrick, Lou Rossiter, Brandon Cave, Alison Carney

- Brandon Cave met with Dave Sulouff re: HVAC system replacement options. Continued exploration and targeting of path forward, engineers/contractors, pricing, design, schedule, impacts to finances, preschool, church operations, parking. Expressed appreciation for Dave Sulouff's willingness to serve as project manager.
- Discussed Shared Ministry progress/upcoming activities.
- Reviewed council member terms and nominations for June congregation meeting.
- Shared status of preschool playground project, planned for summer installation.
- Considered ideas for increasing our welcoming environment at St. Stephen; Council confirmed support for becoming a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation. Expressed support for creation of a family bathroom open to all.
- Shared that Finance is looking into insurance options as our current insurance is expiring.
- Noted website status and needs.
- Reported on Endowment committee member changes.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 9.

Alison Carney, Secretary, Congregation Council



APRIL AWARENESS



APRIL

April is Older Americans month. The goal is to improve the health and well-being for older adults. General health for everyone includes keeping your body and mind active. Physical activity can boost health and mood. Walking is a great exercise and making it social (walking with friends) helps to make it fun. As people age, they lose muscle mass. It is important to do some sort of weight lifting. Be sure to take it easy in the beginning. Getting the advice of your physician or a trainer is best to help you get started. It is also important to keep your mind active. Working puzzles is one way to keep your mind healthy.

As we age, we have an increased risk of falling. This can lead to broken bones, hospitalization, and possibly disability. Sometimes falls can be caused by medications or conditions such as diabetes or heart disease. A good thing to do is have your home checked for tripping and fall hazards. Such things a throw rugs, stacks of papers, electric cords that run across the floor and poor lighting can lead to falls. Did you know the fire department will come and check your home for hazards for you? They will make recommendations on reducing the risk of falls.

The goal for us all is to be independent as long as possible. This means driving ourselves where we want to go. It is important to keep your eyes and hearing in good health as well by getting yearly checkups.

Lastly, what we eat matters where health is concerned. Our bodily needs change as we age. Our metabolism slows and we may need to adjust activity and calories to match. Medications can cause a decrease in appetite in some adults. It is important to keep weight in a healthy range. Choosing more fruits and vegetables can help to accomplish that goal.

If you have any questions, let me know. I will have information posted outside the health ministry office.

Diana Tiller-Dichtel, Parish Nurse

2	Clare Stimson	
3	Evon Crittenden	Marian Thies
4	John Harms	
5	Chris Einarsen	Paul Reier
6	Amber Jansson	
7	Christine Jacobs	
8	Pete Davis	
9	Gerri Bass	
10	Trudi Arnold	Ingrid Brown
11	Art Nelsen	
12	Jenni Punchard	
13	Sara Martin	
14	George Bass	
	Ellen LaPlace	Meghan Osborn
15	Steve Grant	
16	Christine Hallman	
17	Julie Meeks	Ken Spencer
18	Jo Hanny	
20	Bill Miller, Jr.	
21	Bob Groom	(Happy 100th Birthday!)
22	Sharon Jacobs	
23	Ellie Bailey	
24	Noah Delehanty	
25	Mary Swanson	
26	Jennifer Dabel	Sandra Witt
29	Alan Balma	Helen Nelsen
	Susanna Owens	
30	Paula Agor	Donna Crinklaw

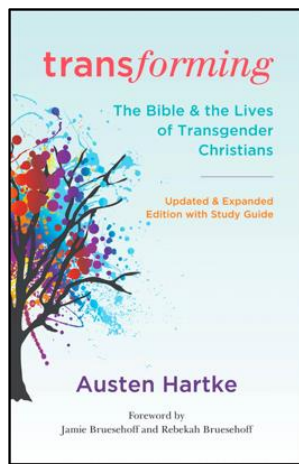


Transforming Book Study Reflection



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First of all, a huge thank you to all who have been part of our *Transforming* Book Study. We have had such meaningful conversations as we have dug into transphobia and the church and the lived experience of transgender Christians. Thank you for your willingness to engage in conversation and for your vulnerability in sharing your stories and your experiences. Thank you!



If you weren't able to join us, I still highly recommend reading the book. It is accessible, and it is an invaluable resource for entering into the discussions around the lives of transgender people.

The hope for this book study was that this would be the beginning of a larger discussion, a larger discernment about who God is calling us to be. The hope was that it wouldn't end here.

"Is it time for God's house to truly become a house for all people" (20). What would/could church be like if "we just accepted people for who they are and how they

were, and loved them there first, before anything else?" (117)

We have a choice: we can choose to be radically, explicitly, and actively inclusive, OR be radically and actively exclusive, OR be passively exclusive (aka "neutral").

Notice that passively inclusive is not an option. Elie Wiesel wrote this: "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." Saying "All are Welcome" with no meat behind it, with no commitment to that welcome isn't truly inclusive. It makes us feel better about ourselves without requiring any real work from us.

To embody true inclusivity, our actions must be deliberate and our welcome unmistakable. In a world where Christianity often actively excludes LGBTQIA+ folks, it is all the more important that our welcome and inclusion is intentional and explicit.

That work can be hard. It can be uncomfortable. It may push us outside of our comfort zones. It will force us to look at the ways we (as a church, as a synod, as the ELCA, etc.) have done harm. It will force us to look at our biases and assumptions. Thank God, there's grace abundant for that.

We must be willing to be challenged, to be changed, (dare I say it?) to be transformed. We must be willing to risk loving others as Jesus first risked loving us – a love that leads to the cross and the grave. All to show us that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

At the March council meeting, Council gave the "go-ahead" to start exploring becoming a Reconciling in Christ Church. As we embark on that process, we'll explore more about what that kind of inclusion looks like and feels like. And we'll wrestle with where we go from here.

Thank you for being on this journey!

Peace,
Pastor Alex

CAMPUS MINISTRY



The Spring Semester for the Lutheran Student Association is off to a fantastic start! It is hard to believe that we're half-way through the semester. We're thrilled to have such a great group of students who join us on Sunday mornings and/or for dinners on Sunday evenings.

SSLC folks - WOW!! Thank you so much for signing up to host dinners. We've had just a fantastic response so far this fall. If you'd still like to host, there are still a few spots left.

LSA Calendar of Events

- **April 14:** LSA Sunday
- **April 20:** LSA Coffee at Aromas
- **May 5:** Senior Recognition/Last LSA Dinner
- **May 16-18:** Commencement
- **May 17:** Spiritual Celebration

Peace,
Pastor Alex

Thank You!



Thank you for your in-kind donation of 120.4 lbs. of food to the Williamsburg House of Mercy. In 2022 we received 184,725 pounds of in-kind donations and rely on these to supplement our costs in providing to the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you for your contribution.



Thank you for your support of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. We depend on our congregational partners, and your contribution of \$200 allows us to stay focused on our mission of engaging people of faith and goodwill to make Virginia a more just Commonwealth.

The Virginia Legislature has a "long session" this year, lasting from mid-January to mid-March. Since 38 percent of the legislators are new to their role, there is

going to be a big learning curve in the General Assembly. Nevertheless, we are looking forward to moving Virginia more toward justice together.

Some of our non-legislative educational and organizing priorities for 2024 include:

- **Working to identify faith land that could be used for affordable housing.** This program is running in parallel with our bill supporting streamlined approval for faith communities building affordable housing on their land.
- **Conducting workshops on wage theft for congregations that serve many low-wage workers.**
- **Increasing outreach to faith communities whose primary language is Spanish.** Reach out to me if you are interested in hearing more, as we expand bilingual outreach beyond Day for All People.
- **Recruiting congregations to become Living Wage Certified.** For more information, please email my colleague Jase Hatcher at Jase@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.

I am proud of the work we do together to make the Commonwealth a more fair and equitable place. Your support and engagement are key to our success.

Sheila Herlihy Hennessee, Faith Organizer



Thank you for your donation of \$750. Some say food is love and we at the Outreach Center agree! Our neighbors come to stock up their pantry but they also know coming to us means being with people who love them and will care for their overall health. You help make that possible through your support.

This past month of January has already seen a huge uptick in families served, with a total of 323 households, compared to 194 from the same time period in 2023! The needs are many as we continue to see people coming for help through all of our services. We couldn't do it without support like yours and with the volunteers who so faithfully show up and do so much work to show that we truly do LOVE Our Neighbors!

Robin Jester Wootton, Development Manager



The Board of Directors and Staff of Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center gratefully acknowledge a contribution of \$1,500 to our ministry of counseling from St. Stephen Lutheran Church. We sincerely appreciate your support.

Rebecca E. Glass, Executive Director



STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 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? (Micah 6:6-8)

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24)

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

I cannot think about the many passages in the Old Testament that guide my thinking about stewardship without including these two passages. Both Micah and Amos wrestled with the fact that God's chosen people were hypocrites. The people came to the Temple, singing the Psalms and offering worship and sacrifices, and then returned to their everyday lives, seeking an advantage over others and little compassion for their neighbors. It seemed that their life with God was limited to their time in the Temple, neatly compartmentalized and cut off from their "real" lives.

We all know people like this. I have had someone tell me

that Christian values are great on Sunday, but if he were to apply them at work, he could not make a profit. For him, his relationship with his bank account was more important than his relationship with his Lord – which only begs the question, "who or what truly is his Lord?" But the most concerning thing about this is that I know just how easy it is to be a hypocrite myself. I am not immune to self-centered living. None of us is. We all fall short. We all need to be reminded of these words of the prophets.

Amos and Micah remind us that living as a child of God means caring about one another (even strangers) in the same way God does. In fact, the most important way someone may know that God loves them could be through our caring response to their need – God loving them through us. God's Word of instruction, such as the two passages above, is the seed that is planted within us; and our actions toward others in response to God's Word is the flower faith bursting forth in our lives and in the world. May our lives blossom more and more with justice, righteousness and lovingkindness as we grow in God's garden!

Your brother in Christ,
Jim Larsen

COMMUNITY LIFE: AFTERNOON SPRING SOCIAL (COME ONE, COME ALL; DRIVERS ARE AVAILABLE!)



All at St. Stephen and our friends at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church are invited to a spring social!

Come and enjoy an hour of fellowship and mingling time with friends old and new, as well as a hymn sing led by our own Ina Berkey. St. Stephen Fellowship Hall, **Wednesday, May 1, 1:30-2:30 pm**. Finger foods and light refreshments are being provided.

Sign up on the bulletin insert or contact the church office to indicate your interest in attending, as well as whether you need a ride or can provide a ride to others.



ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

March was quite a spectacular month for the Preschool. We celebrated Spirit Week with crazy hats, silly socks, and had endless amounts of fun. We had our annual book exchange where students brought in a gently used book to swap for another book. We also enjoy a special snack for Books and Breakfast! As St. Patrick's Day got closer, the sneaky leprechauns caused quite a bit of mischief in the Preschool, but they did leave some special treasures for us to find.

Father's Night was a huge success! Our families enjoyed spending time with their kiddos eating pizza and building rockets and magnetic ponds for fish and frogs to swim.

A big THANK YOU to Jim Weilmuenster for setting up a visit from Gracie the Comfort Dog. We enjoyed a visit from Gracie and read parts of her book as well. We always love to have furry friends visit our school! We capped off a busy month with a fun Easter Egg Hunt, dyed and painted Easter eggs, and enjoyed some special Easter treats.

April is another month full of exciting adventures, including a trip to the Williamsburg Fire House. We are so grateful to have wonderful relationships with members of our community and that they welcome us to visit the Fire House.

Holly Ready, Preschool Director



STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” [Matthew 11:28-30 (the Message)]

At one of my Spiritual Direction intensives, we kicked off our day with a modified lectio of this text. The question our professor asked us to center on still haunts me today. “When was the last time you had a ‘real rest?’” I couldn’t think of an answer, and I think that was the point. Since then, I’ve reflected on the many reasons our beautiful broken humanity will run from this invitation from Jesus to simply rest in Him. I think one of the more understandable reasons we run, avoid and reject rest is when we are in crisis.

For some, the early stages of a loss can be a bit hazy. We go through all sorts of shock and sorrow in that time, and everyone will experience it differently. One common response is to leap headfirst into busyness. Having a funeral to plan, papers to file with a lawyer, or multiple doctor visits to arrange, for example, can almost be a relief in the wake of such distressing times. It may seem easier at first to focus on these worldly tasks. It can give us some sense of control in the face of the uncontrollable. Don’t get me wrong. I don’t think this is a bad thing. There are times when we must be in survival mode and do what it takes to get through the circumstances.

The problem is that this cannot last forever. One by one, the tasks are completed, the people have said goodbye, and we are back in the mundane day to day of life. Now is when we face a choice. Do we allow ourselves a ‘real rest,’ or do we double down and continue with the busyness of less important things? Many of us can get stuck in the busy. We fear slowing down and allowing that ‘real rest.’ We fear it because for those of us that are suffering a loss, rest is when the pain is finally felt. Finding rest within our pain can be almost unbearable.

This is why meeting with a Stephen Minister in these times is so important. No one should walk the path of loss and crisis alone. We are created to support and love one another through the hardest of times. When meeting with a Stephen Minister, no matter how swept up in the busyness of life you are, you can have a designated time and space to slow down and find rest with someone that cares about you by your side.

If this resonates with you in any way, I urge you to reach out. If you find slowing down and resting in Jesus more frightening than comforting right now, please come talk to a Stephen Minister. You don’t have to walk alone.

Christina Nelson, Stephen Minister

UPCOMING SHARED MINISTRY EVENTS FOR WOMEN

As part of our shared ministry with Our Saviour’s, we have been invited to participate in the Virginia Synod Women’s Convention which this year will be held at Our Saviour’s from **July 26-27**. Plans are being finalized, and I will distribute more information as it becomes available. Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church has an active women’s group (Lydia Circle) which meets monthly, and we are welcome to attend their meetings.

In addition to the WELCA Convention, there is an All-Lutheran Women’s Retreat planned for **November 7-9, 2024** in Glen Allen, VA. The retreat leader will be Author Jacqueline Bussie. I will post a flyer for anyone interested.

Pam Buckley

SAVE THE DATE! WOMEN'S RETREAT AT ST. STEPHEN



Mark your calendars for the Women's Retreat events and worship.

- Evening social **Friday, September 27, 2024**
- Day retreat **Saturday, September 28, 2024**



APRIL BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES

PRAYERS



The significance of baptism, Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, is “that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Your baptismal anniversary is an opportunity to light a baptismal candle and to give some prayer time to reflecting on your experiences during the past year on your journey in faith!

Pastor Jon Nelson

2	Daniel Owens	
4	Mark Gulesian	Cyndy Touhsaent
5	Karen Chenault	
7	Tobias Janke	
9	Tommy Peterkin	
10	Paul Black	Brad Jefferson
	Brandon Jefferson	Brock Jefferson
	Justice Jefferson	
12	Gretchen Osborn	
13	Karen Nester	
14	Bob Achenbach	Brian Bergh
16	Quill Agor	
20	Nancy Egloff	Elliot Lawson
22	Chris Einarsen	
23	Phyllis Spencer	
25	Jim Mayfield	
27	Karen Einarsen	
29	Bella Napier	

Others who were baptized in April:

Bob Hanny

Were you baptized in April but your name isn't on the list above? Let us know!

Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Aaren Battle, Ed Brown, Kristin Carter, Steve Grant, Sharon Jacobs, Marilyn Johnson, Evelyn Kernan, Jim Mayfield, Carole Meyer, Christina Nelson, Martha Reier, Mallory Spencer and Linda Vonderheide.**

Pray for those unable to come to worship: **Martin Bleck, Ed Brown, Birdie Burton, York Doerr, Bob and Angie Groom, Edith Haecker, Pat Janot, Jeanne Nelson, Darlene Simon, and Kay Wasaff.**

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Bab Alt, Paula Battle, Donald and Carol Baum, Rose Baumgarten, Sally Blackburn, Linda Bonfiglio, Mary Bloom, Amy Carl, Jerry & Elijah Connor, Judy Craun, Sophia Czajkowski, Judy Drezek, Ginny Mauney Fox, Joel Gillespie, Joan and Frank Goodhart, Deanna Harbison, Nick Havola, Bradley Kim Joan and Laurie Heintzelman, Char Henry, Lisa Hill, Jaxon Ireland, The Jacobs Family, Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, The Kennedy family, Marnah Lund, David Maris, Laura Margolin, Doug Mayes, Jack Mayfield, Becky Murphy, Ed Moninger, John and Pollie Morison, Bob Myers, Silvana Oderisi, Denise Ogborn, Lori Ogborn, Janet Overdorf, Shary Raske, Paula Rega, Mark Punchard, Marci Ries, Sharon Rogers, Betty Roth, Kurtis Schultz, Lou Schuster, Inge Seiter, Kelsey Slay, Brant Smith, Vasili Soultoukis, Chad Strausbaugh, Charley Underdahl, and Caleb Winig.



FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**St. Stephen Lutheran Church
612 Jamestown Road
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The Quill www.saintstephenlutheran.net April 2024

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