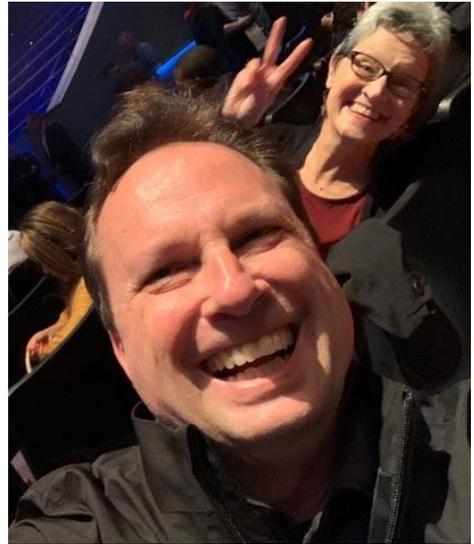


## Monday, October 19 *Lucky Sahualla*

*Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly. ~Matthew 15:21-28*



I love this story because it is one of the few times that Jesus loses an argument. It reminds me that God in Jesus the Christ came to us not only in human form, but as a human. The Canaanite woman may not be from the "house of Israel" geographically or even religiously, but she is Jacob-turned-Israel in that she tenaciously wrestles with God and prevails.

If one were to write the musical of the Gospel of Matthew in the style of Lin Manuel-Miranda of Hamilton fame, one can picture there might be a mixture of sweet songs about God's love and peace, folksy tunes as parables set in daily life, inspirational rock ballads, and fierce rap battles. This would be a rap battle. It would be perhaps set as the final battle in a 3-round freestyle rap off featuring our young and ascendant hero, Jesus, spinning rhymes full of wit and confidence in the wisdom of his teaching and the power in his healings, of how God gives him power over all things.

Round 1: Jesus obliterates the Pharisees about his disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath.

Round 2: Jesus twists the Saducees words into knots over how a person is defiled.

Round 3: Desperate, exhausted mother of a tormented child at her wit's end, pleads for her daughter, taunting Jesus that maybe he is no match for the demon. Undeterred by his response calling her a low down, dirty Canaanite dog in all kinds of colorful ways, she takes Jesus down with one simple refrain, repeated over and over again building it up until she shouts one final time in his face, her hand out ... open ... inviting ... "What you gonna do? You be you!"

Suddenly, what was a raucous crowd falls to complete silence. Jesus' crew, which had been living it up basking in the glow of their leader, freezes. The scene hangs in the air for a moment as we zoom in on Jesus' face, anticipating his response. Is that a bead of sweat rolling down his cheek or a tear? After a seemingly too long pause on that single drop of water hanging precariously from his cheek bone, it falls from Jesus' face. We see he has taken her outstretched hand into his, and he looks her in the eyes and says, "Woman your faith is great. Let it be done for you as you wish." He lifts her arm up in victory, but her other arm comes up too, in praise of God. She falls to the ground crying, her sweaty, tear-stained

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hair splayed over Jesus' feet as the crowd goes wild such as no crowd ever has before, erupting in chant, "What you gonna do? You be you!"

**Dear God, thank you for this glimpse into how you revealed yourself to us through Jesus in humility with a listening ear and a caring heart. Help me stay in that relationship with you, to stay in conversation with you—even if animated and heated at times—about my life, my joys, my pains, my fears, and my hopes. God, I trust you. Give me the strength to wrestle with you when I need to, to praise and thank you when I ought, and to plead to you when I must not lose hope for the healing and justice I seek. Amen.**

## Tuesday, October 20 *Andrea Salas*

I never realized how much I take it for granted that certain things I see as fundamental to who I am will never change, and then, when they do, when they have to change, I'm left reeling.

Up until the last few weeks, I would have instantly dismissed the idea of "internet church" as being something I'd never have an interest in, because as much as my house and my church both feel like home to me, I appreciate the separation and the differences between the two. One is a place to be recharged on a daily basis through the motions of sleeping, eating, interacting with my family, and having me-time, while the other is a place to be renewed through the rituals of worship and connection with my community. Though I do appreciate a chance to sleep an extra hour or two (who doesn't?), the process of getting ready for church and the fifteen to twenty minute drive to get there helps to center myself in a way.



But now, as I write this, we are in the midst of a global pandemic. SARS-CoV-2, a new and rapidly spreading virus more commonly known as COVID-19 or simply Coronavirus, has been wreaking havoc. Businesses deemed non-essential have closed temporarily, though many are doing what they can to adapt without losing too much revenue by switching to doing business online or offering delivery or curbside business. Half the world has come to a standstill.

I, on the other hand, work an essential job at a veterinary clinic, deemed an essential service. Much of my routine is unchanged, except for Sunday mornings. And with the state of things as they are due to the coronavirus – with so many places temporarily closed including places of worship – the inability to go to church has me all discombobulated.

Of course, there have been and will continue to be times when I as an individual can't go to church due to illness, injury, travel, or other personal barrier. But the idea of church ceasing to exist as it always has, even temporarily, as a tangible experience in a physical building surrounded by people able to see, hear, and touch each other – well, it seemed unfathomable to me. But it didn't really hit me until the first Sunday morning after it was announced that CTK would be closing its doors to the congregation and streaming services online, and I was watching the service on CTK's YouTube channel. And the voices of my parents were the only ones I could hear lifted in song with mine, pretty much drowning out the sound of the six people singing on the screen. At the same time, while I could only hear two other voices with me, I could see on the computer screen that there were more than a hundred others, unseen and unheard, sitting at their own tables, isolated in their own homes, watching the same channel, unable to hear any voices but those of the people next to them and the ones on their computers, still holding onto as much of a sense of community as can be had in a time where your world shrinks to the size of a three-and-a-half-by-six-foot table and a nine-by-thirteen-inch screen.

And knowing that, I know that when we are finally able to stand closer than six feet, when we are allowed to gather together with more than nine other people, when we're allowed to shake hands and hug again, the sound of a hundred other voices surrounding me will be a thousand times sweeter.

## Wednesday, October 21

*Federico Salas-Isnardi and Donna Olson-Salas*

*And then he said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we describe it?"*

*It is like the mustard-seed, which is smaller than any seed in the ground at its sowing. But once sown, it springs up and grows taller than any other plant, and forms branches so large that the birds can settle in its shade."*  
~Mark 2:30-32



The seeds of our faith were planted in the fertile garden of Christ the King Lutheran Church in 1987. They were given light and water through the Word and the music of the services. They were given the nourishment of a caring family and new friends and acquaintances.

With the baptism of our three children new seeds were planted in faith that they would grow and be nurtured by the same elements. Today, we have faith that we will continue to be part of a garden of congregants that, over the years, has expanded growing stronger roots, thicker branches, and beautiful flowers.

The faith that we have grown as a community by welcoming different people, incorporating different traditions and ideas while maintaining a strong Lutheran identity has added richness to the soil. This soil has made it possible for the church to adapt to changes; we overcame natural disasters coming out stronger than before. We learned that the faith we grew at CTK is so strong that even in the midst of a pandemic, while unable to attend services at our beloved church building, we continue to worship together while separate. We have realized we are the church not just the building to which we want to return safely someday.

As the tree of our faith celebrates 75 years, we pray:

**Dear God, we are blessed to have seen the small seed of our faith grow into a strong healthy tree in the garden of Christ the King Lutheran Church. Grant that we may continue to be nourished by your word, as our community of faith is healed from this pandemic in your garden now and for many years to come. Amen.**

## Thursday, October 22

Linda Schoene

My childhood friend Ann and I have birthdays just ten days apart. Every year we schedule a birthday call to catch up and reminisce. This year Ann reminded me about a childhood bedtime prayer we shared. Those bedtime prayers remain one of her fondest memories. It goes like this:

***Dear God who loves all children I pledge myself to thee. I'll always do my very best and do it lovingly. Bless this home and all my folks. Protect me as I play and help me to remember to say this every day. Amen.***



In times of crisis such as these uncertainty, worry, fear and isolation can easily become my focus. Trying to understand and find meaning can seem impossible. Ann's reminder led me to think about childhood faith and to try to keep it simple. As infants, trust is one of the first things humans learn, provided they are in a loving environment that is responsive to their needs. There is no more loving environment than to be in God's care and in community with the body of Christ.

As I say this prayer these truths are confirmed and trust is maintained. God is loving and he loves me. Because of his love I am able to show that love in devotion to him and in love for neighbor. I have confidence that I can ask for God's blessings and protection. Finally I can ask God to give me those gentle reminders to be faithful on a daily basis. For me, there is strength in that simplicity and trust.

*Trust in the Lord and do good: dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. ~Psalm 37:5*

## Friday, October 23

*Diane Schoppe*

One Friday night, picking up take-out for dinner, I received a call from my sister. Our father, healthy up until now, was being rushed to the ICU to be placed on a ventilator. I drove home in a shock, plopped the food on the kitchen counter, and ran upstairs to be alone. As I cried in despair and prayed to God to save my father's life, the words of Psalm 130 entered my mind:



*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.  
Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!  
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?  
But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.  
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
My soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.  
O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.  
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.*

These words brought me a measure of calm and peace. They caught me, mid-air, in my descent into crushing grief and fear.

Of course, they arrived in a musical setting! In the evangelical environment in which I spent much of my childhood, we sang for about an hour each service. Most of the songs were straight scriptural texts set to simple tunes. The sermons, however, were rambling and at times, I suspect, not theologically sound. As an adult, I sought out a church with more liturgical structure and was fortunate to eventually find Christ the King.

In this Lutheran church, I feel that I am connected with other Christians around the world, and even with all Christians who have lived before me, in worshipping the risen Christ. So many times, I have experienced God's peace and love through the words in the Bible.

In Sunday School, we ask the children if they are ready, and encourage them to "get ready" to hear the story. As adults, we can also get ready to receive God's gifts, in many ways, including reading and hearing the scriptures, and participating in church life.

What a blessing, to have a framework for life's unanswerable questions, its insurmountable struggles, and its joys which are too big and too vast to absorb. The combination of song, scripture, liturgy, and sound doctrine help to protect me, to catch me, if you will, when I am falling. To remember to hope.

**Dear Father, let your Word rescue us in our despair, strengthen our connections to each other and the rest of Creation, and guide us ever closer to you. I wait for you, O Lord, for in your Word is my hope. Amen.**

## Saturday, October 24 *Jim Shields*

*Keep me from saying words that later need recalling;  
Guard me, lest idle speech may from my lips be falling;  
But when, within my place, I must and ought to speak,  
Then to my words give grace,  
Lest I offend the weak. ~ELW 806*

Black lives matter.

When black people first started this campaign to protest their mistreatment in our criminal justice system, we - rich, powerful, white people - quickly responded with:

All lives matter.

How could black people say they matter more than us?

Oh, how I wish all lives mattered. They don't. The data are overwhelming, obvious, and not arguable. If you are rereading this for the 85th anniversary of CTK, remember that 2020 was the year of the pandemic. Black people are suffering and dying from this horrible disease in numbers that are intolerable and far greater than the numbers of white people who suffer and die. This is nothing new for black people. Our society is, and always has been, rigged against black people.

In his *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain captured the depravity of Southern slave-holding values when he described Huck's inner turmoil over whether to turn in runaway slave Jim or help him escape. Huck's conscience was derived from the society in which he lived, and his conscience told him he would be a low-down scalawag if he didn't turn Jim over to the authorities. Slavery was evil, but society said it was good. Mark Twain resolved this conflict when Huck saw a higher authority than society and said that even though he would go to hell, that would be better than turning in his friend. Twain's genius was in pointing out the obvious through the eyes of a boy.

The bumper sticker morality of today provides cover for the evil of putting more black men in prison than in college. "If you do the crime you're gonna do the time." This evil of institutionalized racism has society so bamboozled that we accept it as good old law and order. Like the society that defined Huck's conscience, today's society allows us to brutalize an entire segment of our population with not even a whimper of protest.

***But when, within my place, I must and ought to speak,  
Then to my words give grace,  
Lest I offend the weak.***

Oh, how I wish all lives mattered. Until they do, we must and ought to speak. The weak are being crushed by us.

Black lives matter.



## Sunday, October 25 *David Stouter*



Faithfulness is everything. It makes it possible for life to flourish even in the midst of difficulty. It makes hope possible. Faithfulness and hope go together and make for results that can pass down the generations. Unfaithfulness in all its forms is destructive of life and hope and it too will pass its legacy down through the generations. The results of this are seen in our national history and in events of our day of which we are having to be much more aware, and I think we need to be.

When we consider God and faithfulness the stakes are higher still. God's faithfulness makes our faithfulness possible. The possibility of our faithfulness is dependent on God's faithfulness. The entire Scriptures and the story they tell about the relationship of God and humankind revolves around the whole idea of faithfulness. In those same Scriptures we see all that keeping faith between God and humankind can be and all that unfaithfulness can be. Those same writings contain examples of accusing of unfaithfulness that goes both ways. The Psalms, a favorite biblical book which is beloved by many, can be shocking when there is accusation but it speaks to our experience.

So important is the need for God to be viewed as faithful that St. Paul in Romans writes, "Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true. Luther in his writings about faith quotes it this way, "Let everyone prove a liar that God may prove true." God's faithfulness is important. God's faithfulness is everything.

Where I work at MD Anderson Cancer Center the questioning of God's faithfulness by patients and their families is not uncommon, not that illness has a corner on the market on human suffering, hardly. But the doubts can exist none the less. Again, Psalms has many examples of this. Mostly a psalm will by the end have come to a reaffirmation of God's faithfulness and love. But some don't. Even if someone does not doubt or accuse God for their current experience, but they can affirm God's faithfulness, it makes a difference in how the experience is met.

Over the years I have changed how I end a prayer with Christians. It just happened one day and now it is a common phrase I use. "We trust in your faithfulness, and your faithfulness to us is your Son Jesus Christ." Or, "...and your faithfulness has a shape and that shape is Jesus." To me that sounds pretty Lutheran. "Let everyone prove a liar that God may be proved true." There is no end to the kinds of things that may lead us to question God's love. Though God may seem to be hidden and things feel bad, God's love for us is proven and present for us in Jesus Christ. St Paul in another letter writes about coming to the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And we might add, in the face of the crucified Jesus Christ. God's faithfulness is shown where we may think God cannot be. And I admit that this chaplain needs to be reminded of that again and again. If faith comes by hearing, then many times in a day faith is nourished and sustained as I "preach" it aloud to myself as well. Our faithfulness is always dependent upon God's prior and enduring faithfulness. In a sense God's faithfulness is more important than our own, which can be a light shining in a dark place.

**O God, we come before you, thanking you for mercies shown to us throughout our lives. May our lives be so ordered by the knowledge of these mercies that they will show forth your glory**

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**to the praise of your Name. We pray this, trusting in your faithfulness to us and your faithfulness to us, is your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. Amen.**