

Complex world. Thoughtful church.



Top Left to Bottom Right: Live streaming worship from the Sanctuary on March 22; planning for Lenten worship on Zoom; the VanHeuvelen kids joining the worship live stream at their living room craft table; dust and beauty...a couple of projects created by a woodworker from a no-longer-needed pen; (center) the Westwood/Pignatello family painting the Church Administrator office-thank you!

Farewell—Blessings Abound

Dear friends,

Thank you for the wonderful experience I have had for the past ten years working for this congregation. As I retire, I will miss you.

After a time of quiet and rest, I will be working on sanctuary and immigration issues at our church, St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral. My husband who retired a few months ago and I hope to go back to Norway next year.



Many of you know that I was a member here as a child in elementary school. I had my first choir experience in the chapel with Larry Fleming as director. We car-pooled with families who are still members here. It has been such a blessing to come back again. As a pastor's kid, you never go back, but this opportunity has allowed me to do just that.

It has been a blessing to work with this exceptional staff. The leadership of the church has chosen a creative and gifted staff. As the one person who pre-dates the rest of the staff, it has been a pleasure to watch the staffing changes unfold. You are in such good and wise hands. I am grateful that Pastor Jen allowed me to continue working once she arrived. (Yes, I know personally that new leadership often results in a total change of staffing). I value Pastor Jen's wisdom and all I learned from her. You are blessed to have her as your lead pastor.

I have been blessed to work with so many of you. What an amazing group of volunteers! I could not begin to list all of the individuals who have given of their time to make my role easier. The Facilities Team and all the volunteers give untold hours to make this church what it is.

Lastly, I have been blessed to spend my time working for a church that truly lives out the values and words of Jesus Christ. Welcoming the stranger, the undocumented, the refugee, the asylum seeker as part of the sanctuary coalition is such important work. The inclusiveness and expansiveness of God and the Triune's teachings are truly lived out at and through University Lutheran Church of Hope. What an honor to have witnessed this first-hand.

*Now may the God of peace give you peace at all times in all ways. May God be with all of you.
2 Thessalonians 3:16 (adapted)*

Blessings and salaam/shalom,
Gayle Bidne

From Zach Busch

Minister of Worship and Music

From the first week of sheltering in place, the words of Julian of Norwich have been on my mind: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

I have read, recited, and sung these words many times, and have long held Julian of Norwich in admiration for her beautiful words and her use of the feminine in recounting images of God and Christ.

But, imagine my fascination when sitting down to read about Julian in depth and realizing that she herself lived in isolation most of her life, and was alive during several outbreaks of plague in her city of Norwich. Suddenly Julian felt closer to me, like a guardian angel.

Julian of Norwich (died *ca.* 1417) was an anchoress. Anchorites were social recluses who withdrew from society for religious reasons and lived in total seclusion (part of the ritual of becoming an anchorite included essentially attending your own funeral liturgy before going into seclusion).

Very little is known definitively about the timeline of Julian’s life or when she became an anchoress in relation to other events that are known about her. It is known that, at age 30 or so, she fell gravely ill, and, upon receiving the last rites from a priest, experienced revelatory visions of Christ. She wrote about these shortly thereafter (an unusual practice for a mystic at the time), and then analyzed them in writing more in depth later in her life. Her writings about Christ are intimate, feminine, and timelessly resonant.

She was well known in the community of Norwich, and regarded as wise and holy. This is a community that, during Julian’s lifetime, was ravaged by Black Death several times, possibly losing over half its population in the span of a generation. Julian knew isolation, and she knew suffering caused by pandemic.

“All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” Christ said these words to Julian, “...so tenderly, without blame of any kind toward me or anybody else.”

Thank God she wrote them down. I believe they are Christ’s words for us now.

Julian is commemorated by Christian churches on May 8.

Worship Life

Thanks to so many who are venturing into the virtual world and praying and worshiping together on Sundays. We are learning a lot and working out the kinks so sound is better and people can participate as much as possible.

Thank you for your willingness to join in. Tune in Sunday morning 10:30 a.m. (or any time after) to view.

Facebook -

<https://www.facebook.com/ULCH>

YouTube -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdafm2u6o-lbK4tLBZNEtGg>

In our tradition, Wednesdays in Lent, are observed. We are posting worship opportunities and moving testimonies. We will worship on Wednesday, April 1. Additionally, watch for worship opportunities all through Holy Week and The Three Days leading to Easter.

Daily

We pause daily at noon and 7:00 p.m., wherever we are, to pray for one



another, the world our community, and ourselves, to breathe and to know the Spirit moving in and through us, always making way in the wilderness.

Centering Prayer – Facebook Live

While we avoid in-person gatherings, we will go live on Facebook every Friday at noon to pray together, learn about Centering Prayer, and other contemplative practices, and read some wisdom from our ancestors and predecessors. Join us for this time of prayer, rest, and fellowship!

Life Events at Hope

We're a community called to hold one another in prayer in every season—in our deepest need and grief, and in our experiences of new life. Here are a few of the life events affecting our community. We need your help to know for what to pray. Please alert a pastor or contact the church office. We include in prayer...

✠ **Welcoming children and baptism**—We pray for those in our congregation who are awaiting children and holding hope in joyful and painful times.

✠ **Deaths**—We pray for all who grieve the loss of loved ones, especially Marge Halvorsen, Lucia and Mark at the death of Leroy Halvorsen on February 21, 2020; Mark Berge and family at the death of Mark's brother Peter; the family of Marilyn Gisselquist, former member and children's choir director; Kristin and Nick Tangen at the death of Kristin's uncle Buddy Kelser; Ann Agrimson and Tim Gustafson at the death of Ann's aunt Helen Ann Powell.

✠ **Marriages**—We pray for those preparing for marriage, and for all relationships of commitment.

✠ **Significant Illness**—We pray for those living with illness: cancer, recovery, uncertain diagnosis, hospice, chemical dependency and other addictions, and mental health struggles, including Ken Lynes, Esther Shivers, Steve Schreuder, Jim Hougen, Miriam Hougen, Edward Nyhus, Peter Ostroushko, Janet Carpenter, Hannah Kiresuk, and Chuck Lewis.

✠ **Separation, Divorce, Retirement, Moves, Graduations, New Beginnings, and, yes, Pandemics**—We pray for so many, including Coral and Ethan Dirks as Coral defends her dissertation and they move to Maryland where Coral has a position as a research audiologist at Walter Reed Military Medical Center. God is with us through it all.

Dust and Beauty

Dust and Beauty. That is our Lenten theme these weeks. It was only mid-February when the Worship Planning Team honed in on our focus. Many images guided us, in particular the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with a gold or silver vein that binds the broken pieces and leaves a stunning cracked beauty. I valued the theme, relishing the truth that God takes our broken selves, our dusty communities, and with the power of forgiveness and grace-filled healing creates beauty.

Now, in the midst of social isolation and Governor Walz' "stay at home" order, mid-February seems like a life-time ago. Dust and Beauty has taken on a weight that we hadn't imagined possible. We're facing daily isolation, grief, economic uncertainty, mortality, exhaustion, struggles for mental health, and plenty of anxiety. Our brokenness, our dustiness is before us. And, at once, I am moved, often to tears, by the beauty and the faithfulness I witness—in you as a community of Christ, in our neighborhoods, in my family, and around the world. This pandemic has us reaching deep into the well of Christ's love. It has us leaning into the practices of faith, particularly prayer. At our best, it has us claiming our values, articulating them, living them.

In these broken and dusty times, I am watching for the beauty. I am watching for the vein of gold that binds and mends, for God active and alive. We've quickly shifted to online forms of worship and gathering. That will be our mode throughout Holy Week and Easter and into May. I am so thankful for each of you and for our staff team. You are in my prayers daily. Please don't hesitate to reach out directly with pastoral care concerns.

-Pastor Jen (jenn@ulch.org and cell 612-227-9673)

Care and Nurture Ministries

Building a Network for Care and Nurture

In these unusual days, the business of caring for oneself while trying to nurture the well-being of family members and/or friends can be exhausting. Pastor Jen and I appreciate the layers of concern impacting our households, our employment (or lack thereof) and our social contacts at a time when physical isolation proves to be the safest action we can take. In this season that is fraught with anxiety, anyone's health (or existing illness) can be compromised by loneliness, worry or isolation. Therefore,

in the next couple of weeks, I will work with others to identify ULCH members and friends who are willing to participate in a Care & Nurture Network. Some folks enjoy making regular phone calls, emails, Facetime, Zoom or video chats. Some like to write notes or send cards. If YOU wish to help in keeping us connected as a faith community, contact me via email or phone.

Pastor Jen and I are tremendously grateful for all of you. Please let one of us know if you're aware of someone from our ULCH community who may benefit from a pastoral contact or a friendly chat with someone on the C & N network. We are working regular hours from home and at the church office. We can be available by email, or phone, if you need to reach out for any reason.

Pastor Barbara barbaraj@ulch.org, 970-901-7189 or Pastor Jen jenn@ulch.org, 612-227-9673

Remember: you must nurture yourself in order to have energy enough to care for others.

- † Take time to be quiet, clear your mind and ground yourself in prayer.
- † Call your own best friend or an extended family member you haven't connected with recently.
- † Take a walk in the fresh air. Watch TV programs or movies that can make you laugh out loud.
- † Listen to music. Sing! Read a book. Write a poem, a prayer or a story, and read it to someone.
- † Limit your news consumption. Pray.
- † Tune in to live streams of Wednesday Lent 7:00pm and Sunday 10:30 worship on YouTube or Facebook. Zoom with others to have a meeting or share a coffee break.
- † Join ULCH's collective prayer times, daily at Noon and 7:00pm. Pray wherever you are at those times, knowing that other church folk are also praying.

May God bless you all with peace, hope and warm sunshine!

Pastor Barbara

Thank You!

Thank you for your faithfulness in giving. We know that part of this weird time is economic uncertainty. When we don't meet in person on Sunday mornings, our patterns of giving shift. In this congregation about 62% of our 2020 giving has arrived electronically. The rest comes via envelopes that are placed in the plate or mailed in. If you are able to mail in your offerings, please do. Another option is to donate online directly from our website: www.uclh.org. If your family is experiencing financial crisis and your giving needs to be adjusted, don't hesitate to be in touch. Also, if you are feeling the stress of economics and job loss, please let Pastor Jen or Pastor Barbara know; we will support one another as we can.

Welcome, Nathan, Church Administrator

Nathan Obrestad lives in Fridley with his wife Sharon and three children, AJ, William and Emily. They are members of St. Williams Church in Fridley. Nathan has worked in the college book-store industry for thirty years, managing the bookstore for Metro State University.

He is currently a volunteer for Irondale Bands, Coach for St. John the Baptist Catholic School Swim Team, and Treasurer for the Celtic Junction Arts Center Board of Directors. He enjoys camping, kayaking, nature photography and playing guitar.

Nathan will work Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. He is available at 612-331-5988.

Welcome, Kari, Financial Administrator

Kari Olson joins our staff focusing on financial administration. Kari told us “I love numbers.” She and her spouse have two girls: one who is three and the other who is six months old. Kari enjoys travelling. She is a graduate of Luther College, where she studied management and social work. A post-college position doing grant billing sold her on her love for numbers and a new trajectory into this financial work. Kari will do much of her work on-site focusing her time on Wednesday afternoons, Thursdays, and an additional half day (TBD). She does financial work for ULCH, in addition to other clients. Kari is available at 612-331-5988 and kario@ulch.org.

Thank you, Gayle!

In April our Business Manager of 10+ years, Gayle Bidne, will retire. What a big transition for Gayle and for our congregation! Thank you, Gayle, for these years of service and tremendous dedication, energy, care, and sacrifice. We pray God's richest blessings on your retirement and the opportunity for new adventures, rest, and time with your beloved Andrew.

PS: A retirement celebration *had been* planned for early May. With the pandemic, we'll reschedule this luncheon as it becomes safe. Notes to Gayle can be sent to the church. You will find a message written by Gayle on page 2.

Our Personnel Committee has worked for more than a year to restructure the Business Manager position into two positions: a 16 hour a week Financial Administrator and a 30 hour a week Church Administrator. With the publication of *The Visitor*, both of our new employees have begun, albeit in some strange times! Welcome Financial Administrator Kari Olson and Church Administrator Nathan Obrestad!

Sunday Forum

With Sunday worship currently on hold, Sunday forums are not meeting. Here are some ideas the forum committee plans to develop in the future: funeral planning, Ben Larson sharing, Stories of Hope, Green Team, Meadowlark Quartet, a session with Rollie Martinson sponsored by Friendly Visitors, and plenty more.

Committee members are Linda Johnson, Brian McCaffrey, Karen Jorstad, John Setterlund, and Diane Greve.

Neighbors in Dinkytown

While we continue to practice social-distancing, keep our neighbors in Dinkytown in your prayers.

Our unsheltered friends don't have the option to stay home, because they don't have access to housing, and the closing of many public buildings has taken away some of the only shelter they may have had access to.

Consider donating to our local shelters who are working hard to provide safety and wellness to as many people as possible.

Community Check-Ins

Keep an eye out for opportunities to join in Community Check-Ins and other online discussion groups during this time of social distancing. We hope to make this opportunity available a couple times each week.

If you are part of a small group or other group that seeks to meet for church business or fellowship, let us know if you need help arranging for technology (like Zoom) to stay connected. The church has two Zoom lines available. These are for audio and/or video. Follow the prompts to get on. If your computer or tablet offers video, you can do this in addition to voice.

We'll take time to check in, share a bit, pray. In the coming weeks we will have some specific conversations looking to Jesus' words, the Bible, and our theology for insight. If you have not used Zoom before, try the link in advance and you'll be prompted to get the app set up so you are ready. If you need assistance, text or call Pastor Jen: 612-227-9673, or email jenn@ulch.org.

Children's Ministry at University Lutheran Church of Hope

We will continue to find creative ways to connect with our youngest members while they are home from school, and we all practice social-distancing. Once a week, likely midweek afternoons, we will gather the entire class (students PreK-6th Grade) on Zoom for a time of check-ins, storytelling, and creativity. A link to these meetings will be sent to parents and families each week and can also be found on the Facebook Group "ULCH Children's Ministry". This Facebook Group will also serve as a hub for resources, where we can share ideas and questions and projects to work on with kids at home. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Nick Tangen at nickt@ulch.org.

At this point we're still planning for our shared day camp scheduled June 15-19. We team up with other Minneapolis congregations, and it's a great week. It will be held at Bethel Lutheran Church in south Minneapolis and the theme this year is 'Water Is Life'. Think baptism, water justice, watersheds, and more. Children, youth, and adults are invited to participate. Volunteers are needed! The registration form is available at church at on our website (www.ulch.org, under education). Please talk with Pastor Jen if you'd like your child to participate, or if you can lend a hand!

Holy Week and Easter

We're learning daily that social distancing will need to last much longer than we at first anticipated. The CDC guidelines suggest we may be live-streaming into May. If you are wondering about Holy Week and Easter, you aren't alone! We plan to worship and live-stream (or record) during Holy Week (Palm Sunday-April 5, Maundy Thursday-April 9, Good Friday-April 10, Easter Vigil-April 11) and Easter (April 12). Watch for details about the timing of these services, or follow them afterward to partake.

Then, in May or whenever we can be together in person, we'll celebrate big: pull out the organ stops, invite the brass, shout "Hallelujah!" and such. We have penciled May 17 for such a gathering, but it's far too early to know what is possible. The point: God makes life in places of death, beauty in dusty times.

Sanctuary & Immigration

Note the team meeting, scheduled for Wednesday April 1 at 5:30 p.m. This meeting will be held on Zoom. A link will be sent to meeting participants prior to the meeting date. <nickt@ulch.org>

Easter Flower Project & Memorials

With our unusual circumstances regarding worship this Lenten and Easter season, you may still send memorial/plant money to the church. A careful record of contributors, memorials, honorees and amounts contributed is being kept. With our Easter schedule being adjusted, the memorials/honorees will be listed later and the plants will be ordered and delivered later in the spring.

Use this link for the current
calendar:

<http://www.ulch.org/calendar>

University Lutheran Church of Hope is a welcoming Christian community of faith centered in God's grace
and called to demonstrate God's love for all the world.
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Rev. Barbara Johnson

Minister of Worship & Music:
Zach Busch

Minister of Faith in Community:
Nicholas Tangen

Church Administrator:
Nathan Obrestad

Financial Administrator:
Kari Olson

Business Manager:
Gayle Bidne

Custodians:
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Gus Gustafson

Childcare:
Gus Gustafson

Working in partnership with
Lutheran Campus Ministry:
Rev. Kate Reuer Welton

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