

The *interim* In Church and Community



From the Senior Pastor Dear Church...



With these words, the Rev. Lenny Duncan initiates a conversation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in his book *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* about matters of racial justice within the church and society.

We, along with Augustana University, were pleased to welcome Pr. Lenny to Our Savior's on September 27. His message was challenging but necessary. He helped us and folks from across the region engage a difficult conversation while calling us to be people of action and justice. He worshiped with us and prayed with us, and he encouraged us to keep at this important work with a sense of urgency that will not allow silence and complicity to set the course for the future.

To that end, we continue to be guided by our annual vision for ministry in all of this: *Out of abundance, we will celebrate God's grace, and embrace and serve all.* Welcoming Pr. Lenny was only one step along the journey of making this vision a reality. Going forward, we will look for opportunities to continue our conversations about racial justice in the church and in our society. Through it all, we will strive to respect each other, especially those with whom we disagree, and we will eagerly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in being a community of welcome that tirelessly works for justice.

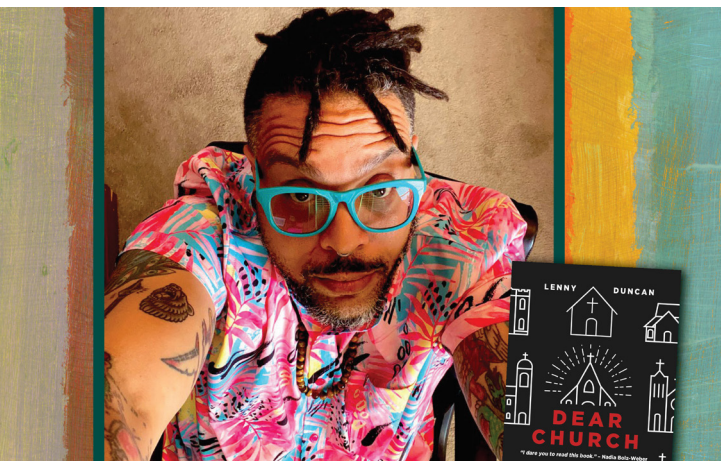
COVID-19 and the Holidays

As of this writing, the infection rate and the hospitalization rate for COVID-19 in South Dakota are at their highest since the beginning of the pandemic. We continue to evaluate the situation here at Our Savior's with an eye toward ensuring the safety of all who participate in in-person programming at OS�.

Because caring for our neighbor is at the core of our COVID-19 protocols, we continue to urge every OS� member and friend to do four simple things to slow the spread of the coronavirus:

- Stay home when you don't feel well or when you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Wear a facemask over your mouth and nose whenever you are with other people who are not members of your household.
- Keep at least six feet between yourself and others.
- Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.

continued



In addition, we call on each of you to keep Jesus' command to love our neighbor at the center of your conversations about plans for the upcoming holidays. We all long to be together with those we love, but the risks of doing so this year may outweigh the benefits.

Here at Our Savior's, we are in the process of making decisions about holiday worship. We anticipate finalizing those plans by the end of October and will be communicating our holiday ministry schedule in the weeks ahead.

I continue to be thankful and count it a privilege to walk alongside each of you as we serve our mission to proclaim Christ and nurture faith that connects to everyday life. I pray that God will grant us the courage and strength to persevere in ministry during these extraordinary times.

With thanksgiving,



Pr. Randy Gehring

A Heartfelt and Humble Thank You!



My heart is truly overflowing with gratitude for all the ways in which you have shared in the celebration of my 25th anniversary of ordination last month. The card shower was such fun, and it meant so much to me to see some of you that I have not seen for quite some time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks especially to Loretta Nelson, Deb Harlan, and Michelle Anderson for being there with me all morning, handing out delicious cupcakes and greeting all of you as we enjoyed the beautiful fall day. Sunday morning was wonderful as well, as Congregation President Dan Van Schepen congratulated me in worship and shared with me a lovely gift on behalf of the entire OSL congregation. I cannot thank all of you enough for the love you have shown to me during this milestone in my ministry walk.

It is such a pleasure and privilege to continue to serve as one of your pastors, and to share in the ministry that God has given to us all. Together, we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, and go about the work of being the Body of Christ in our world. May the Spirit continue to lead us in our journey of faith together!

—Pr. Tim Lemme

Ministry Spotlight Worship & Music in a Time of Pandemic

What's been going on?

How has this ministry adapted and continued during the pandemic?

What challenges did you face?

Did any unexpected joys arise during these past few discombobulated months?

Those were among the loaded questions posed to OSL's Worship & Music ministry team: Gene LeVasseur, Director of Music and Worship; Denny Gale, Celebrate Band Coordinator; Matthew Tylutki, Principal Organist; and Deanna Wehrspann, Music and Worship Professional.

Loaded or not, the questions are legitimate—and important: Worship is the centerpiece of congregational life, and first on the list of OSL's core values, and music, in turn, is vital to the worship experience. How, then, to continue to do justice to that aspect of ministry when group gatherings are problematic if not impossible?

Fortunately, the Worship & Music team joined the rest of Our Savior's professional staff in rising to the challenge.

"We never 'took a break,'" says Gene LeVasseur. "We continued to produce worship services for TV and streaming when in-person worship was suspended. Deanna continued to coordinate readers, develop worship planning resources, and serve as a musician. Denny coordinated the Celebrate musicians and led worship as a singer and guitarist. Matthew continued to serve as principal organist, leading Festive worship services, and also has produced "Freddy's Faithful Friends" and Music Devotions videos. I continued to plan and direct Festive and Celebrate worship services musically and administratively."

"Because of COVID, we had to limit the number of people in the band," says Denny Gale. "We have a seven-person limit, for spacing. That works, but it's forced Gene and me to ramp up our planning to make sure all parts are covered—vocal and instrumental. We've had to do more personnel planning.

"And we had to put the kibosh on midweek rehearsals," Denny adds, "except for some special songs. We'd love to get back to them."

"I miss the rehearsals too," Matthew Tylutki echoes, "choir rehearsals, leading congregational singing—that's probably the biggest loss for me, leading from the organ. The congregation probably feels that way, too.

“But on the positive side, I’ve gotten to focus on conducting smaller groups from the console, adding more outside musicians—safely—creating Freddy videos to add to worship life here. It’s been a good outlet for creativity. Sometimes limitations can bring out the Spirit in new ways, especially in worship.”

Deanna Wehrspann agrees: “Personally, I’ve enjoyed doing a lot more quartet singing in Festive,” she says. “And I’ve felt very safe in the balcony,” where singers and musicians strictly observe social distancing guidelines.

all have done this with amazing grace and love.

“One of the biggest challenges we’ve had is serving communion safely. Several top health professionals, the pastors, and communion team leaders developed a method that has worked beautifully for in-person worship services. Another huge challenge is that worshipers at in-person services are encouraged to *not* sing or speak. Humming music, clapping, raising hands, etc. are not ‘normal’ for us, but both the congregation and leaders continue to find ways to actively worship safely.”



The Worship & Music team at work: Deanna Wehrspann, Matthew Tylutki, Gene LeVasseur, Denny Gale, and Freddy.

Sometimes, assembling the crews that help make worship services happen has been a challenge. “Maybe 55% of readers are not comfortable coming in yet,” Deanna estimates. “But we’ve always had somebody. The ones who do come in are doing double- or even triple-duty, and are stepping out of their comfort zone a little—they’re more likely to say ‘wherever you need me’ instead of requesting a particular service. That’s really appreciated.”

Naturally, Deanna hopes the COVID-19 situation will improve greatly in the near future. “We have readers who really want to read again—they see it as a calling—and the same for choir members. They’re being safe, but they feel sad.”

“That’s true of all volunteers,” Gene adds. “Greeters, ushers, cantors, sound, TV crew, communion servers. Now that we are doing in-person worship again, we’ve had to do it as safely as possible with about 25% of the volunteers. Everyone has had to adapt, and

What about pleasant surprises that may have emerged during the pandemic? “Without a doubt, the Freddy video series in Kidtalk has been our number-one unexpected joy in worship ministry,” Gene says. “Matthew has a passion and talent for producing videos and we have found that our adults love these as much as the children. Another huge joy for both leaders and the congregation has been the adaptations and creative writings for worship. The pastors and musicians are creating texts and music that are *Connecting Faith with Everyday Life*. What a blessing it is to have such faithful servants here working together and being led by the Holy Spirit!”

And to circle back to the top question: *What’s been going on?* The answer is *a lot*, with lots more to come as ministry continues full speed at Our Savior’s, meeting and overcoming challenges. Just as it’s always done. ♦



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Worship Services

Saturday Evening – 5:00 P.M., Sanctuary

Sunday Morning

Celebrate Worship – 8:45 A.M., Celebrate Center

Festive Worship – 10:15 A.M., Sanctuary

Television and Internet

Celebrate: 9:00 A.M., KTTW (cable channel 9; channel 7.1)

Festive: 1:00 P.M., KSCB (cable channel 30; channel 53),

Facebook Live, 8:45 and 10:15 A.M.

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