Sundays in Lent enter into the Passion Story

The events of Christ’s Passion, which take place during the last week of Jesus’ life, often don’t receive enough time in our worship and study. These stories are important to our faith journey and our identity as followers of Jesus. And yet we often move too quickly from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday with little time to take in the dramatic story of that last week.

This year, during the Sundays in Lent, FCC’s worship services will “freeze-frame” moments in the Holy Week story so we might put ourselves in the picture, thereby “Entering the Passion of Jesus.” During each Sunday in Lent, music, Children’s Moments, scripture readings, drama presentations and sermons will focus on a different key event of Holy Week. Palm Sunday and the cleansing of the Temple were the first two stories on March 1 and March 8.

Even the Adult Faith Formation classes at 9:30 in the Gathering Space will be focused on this same theme of “entering the passion of Jesus.” So join us Sundays in Lent – and bring a friend!

Lent observances with our ecumenical partners

During Lent 2020, FCC members will connect with other faith communities who are a part of the Downtown Congregations who work together through AlignMpls (formerly Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness). Throughout Lent, FCC folks are invited to attend weekday or Sunday evening Lenten Services of other Downtown Congregations. Here is the schedule:

March 18: 12 noon or at 6 pm for a Taize Service at Westminster Presbyterian (12th & Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis) – 30 min in length
March 25: 12 noon and/or 7 pm at Central Lutheran (back side of Minneapolis Convention Center next to 35W) – 30 min in length
March 29: 5 pm Evensong at Plymouth Congregational (Franklin & Blaisdell)
April 3: 6 pm Shabbat Service at Temple Israel (2323 Fremont Ave S, Minneapolis) – we will gather with Rabbi Zimmerman prior to the service – more info coming as we get closer to this service
Voices and Views
Dan Adolphson

Showing Up in Community

From time to time, we invite you to join us up at the State Capital or somewhere else around the Twin Cities to make a more public statement about an issue as a person of faith. You may be asking yourself does it really matter if I show up?

Let me answer this around two different issues. By the time this newsletter hits your inbox, some of us from First Christian Church will have been up at the Capital at Homeless Day on the Hill, sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and supported by AlignMpls and a host of other organizations. Last year, one of the issues that we stood strong for as people of faith was a $100/month increase to MFIP. The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), is the state's welfare-to-work program. MFIP provides employment support and temporary cash assistance to children and their parents who are striving toward full-time employment. Last year when we were advocating, MFIP cash assistance hadn’t increased since 1986! Our voices as people of faith made a difference in this and not only helped get the increase passed, but also helped support a $3 Million investment to the Emergency Services Program. Emergency shelters are the starting point to gaining long-term stability. With lodging on a short-term basis (usually less than three months), emergency shelters provide an individual or family experiencing homelessness with a clean, safe place to stay. These are 2 of 9 programs related to our work with AlignMpls that saw success last session.

We also are working hard on year #2 of passing a statewide conversion therapy ban. “Conversion therapy,” often referred to as “reparative therapy,” “ex-gay therapy,” or “sexual orientation change efforts,” includes a range of dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing a person’s sexual orientation, or efforts to change a person’s gender identity or expression. Last year, we saw success in the House (but not in the Senate), and this year we are working hard on changing hearts and minds, reminding everyone of this simple idea: that which is not broken need not be fixed – we are created perfect in God’s image as we are. Our faith voices are making a big difference in this fight, and our hope is that this year we will help our partners carry this across the finish line.

When people of faith show up and speak out in favor of the extravagant love and welcome of the gospel of Christ, people sit up and take notice. It is the living gospel of love that changes hearts and minds. That’s why it matters if we show up.

In Our Prayers...

Prayers of Joy
For choir section leader Deanna Davis’ recent marriage

Prayers of Sympathy
For Laurie and Bryan Feille on the death of the last of their three greyhounds

Prayers of Concern
For Wendy Manuel’s sister Susan as she recovers from heart surgery
For Gary Maanum’s cousin Barb, recently diagnosed with cancer
For all homebound members including Karen Plantikow and Gomer Pound

Prayers for the world
For health care workers, health care policy makers and all people affected by the coronavirus epidemic

Keep These Friends in Your Heart

Keep These Friends in Your Heart
Enjoy a Family Fun Day on March 28

In the spirit of our recent months of sabbatical renewal, FCC has another Family Fun event scheduled: a visit to SeaQuest in Rosedale Mall on Saturday, March 28. The SeaQuest website promises “an adventure through rainforests, deserts and the depths of seas, with exhibits and activities like getting wet with stingrays, feeding birds and reptiles, marveling at sharks, and much more.” A sign-up sheet is in the sanctuary, or contact Kirsten Cackoski.

Book Club meets March 23

FCC’s book club will discuss Gail Honeyman’s *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* on March 23, 7 pm, at Amy Dunlop’s home (3250 Fairchild, Wayzata). All are welcome!

Dementia-friendly worship services offered

Claire Klein, a member of Lyndale UCC, has issued this invitation:

People with memory care needs and their care partners are invited to a new worship service at Hazel Park UCC (1831 Minnehaha Ave E, St Paul, MN 55119): **Mondays March 23, April 20, and May 18 at 10am**. These short services will feature favorite hymns, active participation, and joy-filled interaction led by Claire Klein, a Board-Certified Music Therapist and recent seminary graduate. Volunteers will be ready to welcome you and help you feel at home. Contact Claire Klein (dementiafriendlyworship@gmail.com or 612-250-6700) for more information or with any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to worshipping with you!

March is Minnesota Food Share Month

The Mission and Outreach team invites you to bring nonperishable food items to FCC and place them in the white barrel in the sanctuary during March. These food donations go to the Groveland Foodshelf. Monetary gifts to Groveland are also welcomed – and go far in purchasing food. Make checks to FCC, with Groveland Foodshelf on the memo line.

Summer Help needed for watering plants and food shelf volunteering

Bobbi Hall is seeking some help this summer for some of the jobs she does for FCC. She will be staying at her St. Croix home during the summer, and, at the insistence of her children, will not be driving into Minneapolis as often as she has in the past.

**Groveland Food Shelf Work:** On the first Monday of each month – and the 5th Monday if there is one – Bobbi volunteers at Groveland Foodshelf. A substitute is needed for June 1 and 28; July 6, and August 3 and 31. Bobbi will be happy to explain more about this work and about the time involved.

Contact Bobbi if you are able to help with any of these small but important tasks.
Sundays at First Christian Church
Worship at 10:30

Before Worship
Children’s Classes, 9:15 am
Joint Adult class 9:30 am

After Worship
Fellowship Time 11:45

Passion Story Text
For Sunday, March 15
Render Unto Caesar
Matthew 22:15-22

Reflections on the Word
Matthew 22:17 – “Tell us, then, what you think, Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”

Jesus’ answer to the trap question put to him about paying taxes, calls us to live in whole-hearted allegiance to God, while navigating in life contexts that often pull at that allegiance. We need to seek God’s wisdom and discernment as we desire to follow Jesus in a world full of siren songs.

Loving God, Help us remember to always open our hearts to your guidance as we try to navigate our way through a world full of difficult choices, Amen.

from Jeannine Brown, Bethel Seminary, on Working Preacher.