

Stories from the Plaza



Christ the Servant
LUTHERAN CHURCH

SUMMER 2024

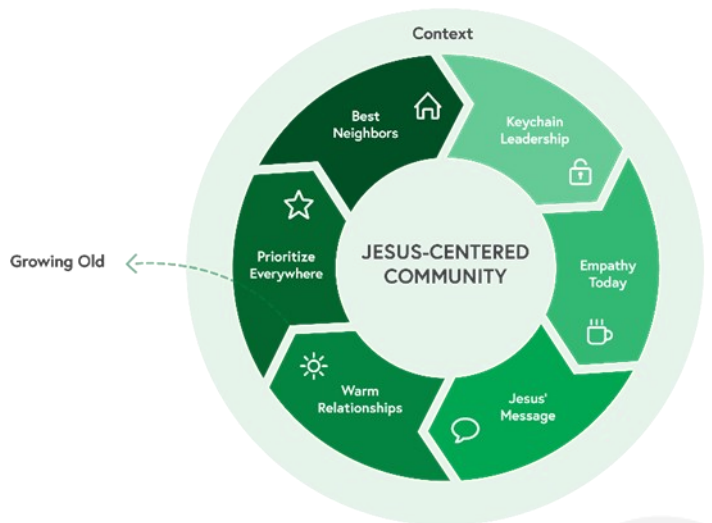
*All churches grow old.
Strategic churches are growing young.*
-Fuller Youth Institute

This past spring, Pastor Kenny led a discussion series on the book, *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin. The well-attended sessions generated great discussions and focused on the lessons revealed in the book on churches that are “Growing Young”. The authors are from the Fuller Youth Institute, a branch of the Fuller Theological Seminar in Pasadena, CA, whose mission is to “equip diverse leaders and parents so faithful young people can change our world”. Based on research from over 250 diverse congregations on how they are serving and supporting their young adults aged 15 to 29. Each chapter of the book explores a strategy that congregations with thriving young adult populations are successfully employing. They called these churches “Growing Young” because of successful engagement of their 15–29-year-old population and because they are growing, spiritually, emotionally, missionally, and sometimes numerically.

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GROWING YOUNG BY CHRIS WHITMAN

During each session, we discussed one of the six lessons learned shared in *Growing Young* and talked about how they applied to CTS. The lessons, shown in this illustration from the book, highlighted what churches that were growing young were doing and each aspect worked in harmony with the others to empower young people and enliven their churches.



“Christianity is about the restoration of how it is all supposed to be. We have been given hope, we have been redeemed, and we have been empowered by the authority of God to go out and change this world.”

-Isaiah, age 20 (From *Growing Young*)

“This is a changing church, and we’re part of a changing world. I’ve learned that I need to be big enough to change with it.”

-Hank, age 76 (From *Growing Young*)

LESSONS & TAKE-AWAYS FROM GROWING YOUNG

Unlock keychain leadership: "The Question Isn't, 'What Are We Going To Do?' The Question Is, 'What Aren't We Going To Do?'"¹ Give the kids the keys and let them drive, we don't and shouldn't do it all.

Empathize with today's young people: "Back in my day..." No. Just no. The complexities of modern life are less forgiving than ever before and grace and empathy are needed for young adults, even more now.

Take Jesus' message seriously: "I'm not dead yet."² Young people live in the present and they want to hear about Jesus alive and in their lives today.

Fuel a warm community: "Engaging people is about meeting their needs, not yours."³ Relationships matter to all of us, relationships matter A LOT to young adults to keep them engaged in a faith community: People>Worship Rock Bands

Prioritize young people (and families) everywhere: "If you build it, [they] will come..."⁴ Do the work. Don't just say you support young adults and families, prioritize them by creating programs, assigning leader roles, and providing support.

Be the best neighbors: "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor Would you be mine, could you be mine?"⁵ Young people want to make a difference. Do our words, actions, building, and programs reflect our desire to be a good neighbor by offering grace, seeking to understand, giving support, and seeking justice for our next-door and global neighbors?

¹ Ferris Bueller's Day Off ² Monty Python

³ Tony Robbins ⁴ Field of Dreams ⁵ Fred Rogers

THE HYMN SING TRADITION

BY ALEXANDER BEAN

On June 21st, we had the second annual CTS hymn-sing at the Bean-Trotter house. The practice of singing hymns at home with friends has a long history (though an intermittent one at CTS), dating back to the late Middle Ages. Our hymn sing featured eleven songs accompanied by myself on organ and (in the spirit of communal collaboration) Josh Wilson on banjo.

Our songs featured a selection of the hymnal's "greatest hits" as well as easy-to-sing though unfamiliar tunes. We began with "All People That on Earth Do Dwell" (which is to the same tune as our doxology in service), followed by "Father, We Thank You" (a tune by the same composer, and in a similar manner very singable). Next we sang the rhythmic version of "A Mighty Fortress is our God", which has the same pitches as the isorhythmic version we more commonly sing in church, but with syncopated rhythms that (in my opinion) make for a much more fun singing experience.

The bulk of our songs were Americana, about half drawn from the Sacred Harp volume *Southern Harmony*, and the rest a mix of African-American traditionals and other American hymns. Sacred Harp music is intended for communal singing outside of church, and the tunes are very singable. *Southern Harmony* is the source of some of our most beloved hymns, including "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens", "I come with Joy", and the perennial favorite "Amazing Grace". While these songs were not originally intended for banjo accompaniment, the organ and banjo blended beautifully and created a sound evocative of the bright vocal tone of Sacred Harp music.

This past hymn-sing was a wonderful evening of social music-making in a low stakes environment. You are invited to our next hymn-sing, which will be held in the winter holiday season. All are welcome at all levels of musical ability, and we look forward to seeing you at our next music-making event.



IMPRESSIONS OF THE 2024 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

BY FRED SHERMAN

The assembly began with a full communion service officiated by Bishop Ortiz. The sermon was delivered by Rev. Maryiann Edgar Budde, Episcopal bishop of Washington. Bishop Ortiz then declared the assembly open, and the day proceeded with workshops and plenary sessions, with box lunches provided. I attended Rev. Budde’s workshop, in which she addressed the theme of her book, *How We Learn To Be Brave*. I found her presentation inspiring, as is the book. The other workshop I attended, was given by the pastor who mentored Bishop Ortiz and was instrumental in facilitating a scholarship for her to attend seminary. His principal topic was how clergy can best serve their congregations.

The plenary sessions featured reports from synod department heads, as well as the bishop’s state-of-the synod report. These reports gave me insight into the breadth of the synod’s endeavors. Motions were adopted concerning various budgetary matters, position statements the synod should put out, and so forth. Business having been completed, Bishop Ortiz closed the assembly, and a closing service was held. As attendees departed the venue, designated clergy were available to confer personal blessings. Overall, the assembly was well run, and I did have a sense of the divine.



METRO D.C. SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

THE JOYS OF WINE

BY HERTHA LANGE

On June 15, Christ the Servant had our second reoccurring wine tasting party hosted at my home. Vaughn Siegenthaler selected a fantastic assortment of German wines for all to taste. As is the custom, each person received a grading paper to judge their own wine pallet and review all of the notes provided. Vaughn spoke about the different grapes used to make the wine and the combinations. There was an incredible display of deserts and snacks provided by all who participated. We had 22 people join the party and we hope you can join us next time! It is a wonderful event to invite friends or neighbors to. Not only is the wine always delicious, the company is great!

FEEDING OTHERS FROM THE HUB

BY HEATHER WHITMAN

In a non-descript office building in Sterling, sits a warehouse full of love for one’s neighbor. It’s also known as the FREE from Hunger Center (Food Rescue Empowerment Enterprise) – a lot of words to describe a place with a simple mission – put food into the hands of people who are hungry. The Center opened in the fall of 2023 and serves as a bridge between food service donors and food service programs. Food from grocery stores, eateries, and farms is donated to the Center, sorted, and then given out to various food pantries and feeding programs.

Volunteers are needed to help sort and organize the food donations. Twice this spring, members of our congregation volunteered at the Center.

Volunteering is easy! The wonderful staff at the Center will give you a tour and explain how they collect, store, and distribute food. They will instruct you on how to separate all the different food items, weigh and prepare them for distribution. Shifts are in two hour increments and there’s plenty of opportunity to chat with your fellow volunteers. Bring a sweater as the refrigerated area can be chilly! Yes, one of the biggest advantages of the Center is the climate controlled and refrigerated storage they have for perishable items.

I hope that you will join me this fall when CTS organizes more opportunities to serve at the FREE from Hunger Center.



Pride in Community

BY KELLY CHAMPAGNE

Although Christ the Servant only recently became a Reconciling in Christ congregation (joined in 2020), this congregation has been historically committed to providing an authentic welcome and affirmation to all of God's beloved people since its inception. Our welcome statement was a precursor to this and was unanimously in 2010. Living out this commitment includes showing up for the LGBTQIA+ community and publicly sharing God's love at the annual Reston Pride event.

To prepare for this year's event held on Saturday, June 1, a group of eight members gathered together after worship to share their ideas. The team agreed their common goal was to be a reminder to all Pride attendees that they are loved by God and there are people who identify as Christians who love, see and value them too!

already planned for May 26 to be Reconciling in Christ Celebration Sunday—what a perfect day to get the congregation involved in this service project!

A group of awesome volunteers spent a few hours decorating the church in preparation for RIC Sunday—as a reminder of God's abundant and unending love for each and every one of us. So many balloons were blown up (a few popped along the way!), lots of pieces of tape handed off, and hundreds of feet of colorful streamers were cut and hung from the ceilings. There was color everywhere including a large balloon arch in front of the Lord's table. Most of these decorations stayed up for the entirety of Pride month to keep the celebration going week after week.

We got lucky on RIC Sunday with sunny but not scorching weather so the team set up the new Christ the Servant branded tent outside! Many people walking by kept looking over to see what this new tent was for and a few even stopped to ask about the church.



One youth member, Gabby, came up with a great idea to not only share God's love at the event, but to also get the rest of the congregation involved even if they couldn't attend. "Let's make beaded bracelets!" she exclaimed and immediately started planning what supplies would be needed. It just so happened Pastor Kenny and staff had





Upon entering the church, everyone received a colorful Hawaiian lei as a reminder that you are a unique child of God and you too are loved by God. It was a joyous and uplifting worship service thanks to the choir who led us in song.



Many from the congregation got to work after worship making 80 beautifully colored beaded bracelets that said things like “You are Loved”, “God Loves You” and “Happy Pride”. There were also mimosas and various treats provided by members to sustain us as we beaded.



Before we knew it the Reston Pride event was upon us! Christ the Servant’s table was decked out with a new branded table cloth, stickers, temporary tattoos, colorful fans, ceramic crosses hand-made by Director of Music, Alex Bean, beaded bracelets, candy, and flags representing many LGBTQIA+ identities. All items were free to whoever wanted them. The bracelets were a huge hit and were all gone within an hour! Thanks to your generosity to Christ the Servant, we were

able to cover the cost of these giveaways, the registration fee, and the new branded tent and table cloth from the church budget.



Barbara and Roger Fielding were two of the members who volunteered at the table for a few hours. They shared, “It was a great day with nice weather! There were lots of religious organizations but the best part was recognizing everyone as part of our community with no judgments and ‘seeing’ each other no matter what we look like. Everyone was so welcoming and willing to talk and interact.”

Chris Whitman saw God throughout the day “in the faces of people who could walk around without a protective barrier around themselves for fear of being judged. It was moving to see the visible relief and joy of full acceptance and love.” Chris’ favorite part of the day was “watching people get excited over the bracelets we made.” Know that your time assembling these bracelets made a difference in the lives of many people that day!

A big thank you to all those who helped with RIC Sunday and Reston Pride including: Denise Akob, Gabby , Kelly Champagne, Barbara & Roger Fielding , Kay Mosher, Peg Siegenthaler, Rolyn Trotter, Heather & Chris Whitman, Hadley



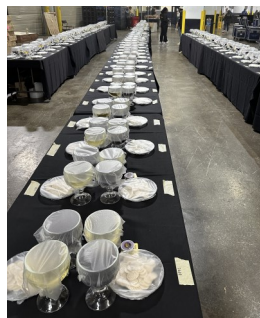
THE CHURCH IS DYING?

BY PASTOR KENNY

For at least a decade now, the prevailing message from most mainline denominations has been that the church is dying. That message was amplified as churches returned to worship following the COVID-19 pandemic but the pews were even more empty than before. It is no secret that church attendance is down and that Christianity in the United States is no longer the religion of the majority. But is the church really dying?

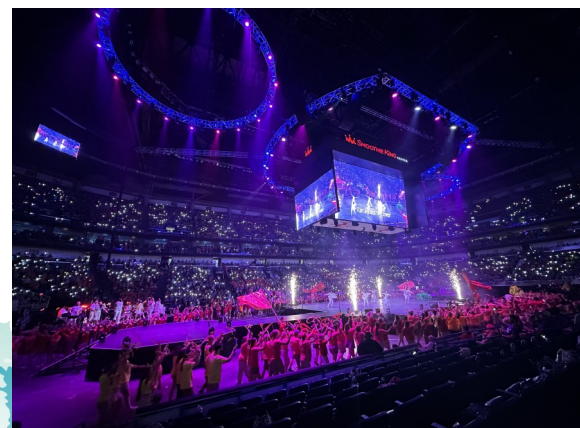
I just returned from two weeks in New Orleans, LA for the triannual ELCA Youth Gathering that brings Lutheran youth from all over the country (and some international students as well) for a week of service, worship, learning, and fun. Each night, we filled the Smoothie King Arena with 16,500 youth who sung loudly, worshiped, listened deeply, and celebrated the life that we find in Christ. Sitting in that arena, I can 100% confirm that the church is NOT dying! The church is alive and well with voices of joy and excitement, pain and sorrow, hopeful and faithful.

For those two weeks in New Orleans, church looked like dance parties, Tik-Tok dance moves, and crowd waves in an arena. It looked like deep truth telling, experiencing the uncomfortable, and confessions of harm. It looked like pyrotechnics throwing fire to the sky, rock and roll guitar riffs, and loud rumbling bass hits. It looked like t-shirts and shorts, robes and stoles, jeans and hoodies. It was a 10 minute processional with dancing, photos and videos shared, and phones being used to fill the darkness with light. It was freedom to express the movement of the Spirit without judgement or hindrance to be our authentic selves. IT WAS CHURCH! And IT WAS ALIVE AND WELL!



What is dying is not the church but the old ways of doing church that so many hold onto for comforts sake and an individualistic view of the body of Christ. The church as we know it is at an impasse. We can either cling tightly to the “way it has always been” and watch that way slowly wither or we can release it to the next generation to take the foundations that have been laid, listen to the Holy Spirit, and create something wholly new. I can tell you after my weeks in New Orleans, if we do let go, the church is in tremendous hands and what can and will be is unbelievably exciting and a lot of fun!

Yes, more and more churches are closing their doors. Yes, there are fewer people attending churches BUT this is not because God has abandoned the church or because younger generations don't believe in God. It is because we have created an idea of what church has to be and have hinder (and in some cases eliminated) the movement of the Spirit to create new ways of being church!





Christ the Servant
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Save the Date

ELECTION ADVOCACY

Throughout Sept., Oct., & Nov.

THEOLOGY PUB

4th Tuesday @ 7:00 PM

FALL KICK-OFF

September 8

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

September 9 @ 12:00 PM

CONFIRMATION RETREAT

September 14

THANKSGIVING BASKETS

November

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING & LUNCH

December 8 @ 11:45 AM

Visit

www.ChristServes.org

For More!

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Sunday Worship | 10:00 AM

Family Worship | 11:15 AM



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Evangelical
Lutheran Church
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DISCOVER
belonging



Reconciling in Christ
Congregation