

The Zion Flame

May 2021



Zion Lutheran Church
7215 Valley View Rd. Ferndale, WA

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 434 Custer, WA 98240

Email: office@zionlutheranwhatcom.org

On the web: www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org



Pastor Becky Langholz

Dear family in Christ,

I am half Armenian, from my mother's side. My mother's parents were born in Armenian communities in Boston, MA in 1920 and 1922. Their parents (my great-grandparents) immigrated to the United States escaping persecution in Turkey around 1905. Some of you might have heard the news that on April 24th, President Biden used the word "genocide" to describe what happened to 1.5 million Armenians killed in Turkey from 1915-1923. At the risk of angering important NATO ally Turkey, he is the first sitting president to formally do so, ever. This follows both the US House and Senate passing resolutions in 2019 also using the word "genocide" to condemn the events. The acts are largely symbolic, but even for someone like me—100 years and three generations removed—the news brought relief and validation.

A "genocide" is defined as "the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation." This Armenian event has the sad distinction of being the first genocide of the 20th century but certainly not the last. In the early 1930's, Hitler once justified his Holocaust plans by saying, "No one even remembers what happened to the Armenians." In other words, when we do not tell the truth about trauma and when we are not held accountable for our wrongs, us humans are doomed to keep doing the same awful things to one another.

One of my favorite theologians Fr. Richard Rohr says that we are in an apocalyptic time, though not in the way you might think. The Greek word "apocalypse" simply means "unveiling" or "revealing" of things as they are. We are in a time when we tell the truth about collective wounds that have been festering for far too long—slavery, racism, genocide. This is uncomfortable and messy, and it is difficult to face. Our recent social unrest and division reflects this. But if the lesson of the cross teaches us anything it is that the only way forward is through—through discomfort, through pain, through death of the way things once were. The truth is being made known these days, whether we like it or not. Will we listen? Will we see things for how they have been? Will we learn new ways of being together?

I cannot help but think that President Biden felt freer to use the word "genocide" for the Armenians because earlier in this same week a jury finally called police officer Derek Chauvin's act "murder." In another example, our Northwest WA Synod is gaining traction with a plan for reparations for our BIPOC pastors, deacons and mission developers. The door has opened for action now because so many have bravely told their stories in this past year. If we allow it, truth-telling can show us a new path forward.

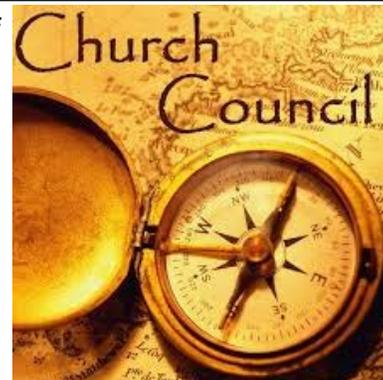
The Church celebrates the festival of Pentecost this month on Sunday, May 23rd. In this event, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the disciples and enables the Gospel to be shared in languages and places previously thought unimaginable. God's grace will not be held bound. God is always making the circle wider and wider; there is room for all. Our sins of the past do not have to shape our future. The truth can set us free.

In Christ's love,

Pr. Becky Janigian Langholz

Pr. Becky is regularly in the office on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am-12pm.
She can also be reached by cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or by email: pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org

The Church Council will meet on Wednesday, May 12th at 4:30pm. If you have reports or agenda items for the meeting, please get them into Pr. Becky by Monday, May 3rd. Council members, information for the meeting will be in your boxes for review by Thursday, May 6th.



Church financial report (through March 2021)

General Congregational Funds: \$39,077.69

Special Funds: \$7,959.21

Thrivent Limited Maturity Bond: \$22,787.24

For the year 2021:

Receipts: \$28,516.00

Expenses: \$13,411.52

Net: \$15,104.48

Treasurer Ken Quinn's hard work helped Zion to obtain a second PPP loan in January 2021 in the amount of \$12,185. After it was used in February and March for designated expenses, the remaining balance is \$2,387.05. PPP funds and the expenses they were used for are not included in the above listing.

Pr. Becky and her family will be away on vacation starting Thursday, May 6th, and she will be returning to work on Tuesday, May 11th. Pr. Tom Wolbrecht will preach and preside at Zion on Sunday, May 9th. There will be no Zoom worship offered that day. Emergency pastoral care will be available, and if needed, please contact President Norman Meyers (360) 332-8656.

Pr. Becky is in the church office Mondays & Thursdays from 9-12pm. She is also working from home and can be reached on her cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or via email at pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org Fridays are her day off; only emergency or prayer chain calls/texts on Fridays, please.

Sadly, Zion suffered some vandalism on the night of March 19th. The clear, protective panes of glass in front of one of our sanctuary stained glass windows were broken. **Our Northwest WA Synod granted us \$1000 towards the cost of repair and expressed condolences for the event.** The repair is underway by local company "Glass Gurus" (estimated cost is \$1100). Three security cameras have also been installed at the church. A Thrivent Action Team grant of \$250 was secured towards the total of about \$600 for the cameras and installation. Many thanks to Rob Tennyson for his help researching and getting the cameras set up. Please consider contributing to the remaining \$450 needed to cover the cost of this incident.



Zion will hold its semi-annual congregational meeting on Sunday, June 6, immediately following 10am worship. This will be a chance to touch base about stewardship, our ongoing pandemic response and more. Thank you for making time for us to meet.

From the Bishop May 2021

In the book *Anxious People*, the author, Fredrik Backman, crafts a humorous, poignant, and wise story of a group of people thrown together because of a bank robbery. But the bank robbery is the least interesting part of the book. The characters, who seem flighty and weird and strange or just unlikeable at the beginning of the book, change into complex humans with such rich inner lives that you love each of them by the end of the story. This was one book that I was sad to see end because I wanted to continue with each character in their journey.



I finished this book during Holy Week. And I couldn't help but reflect on the flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable people that surrounded Jesus that we get to know in the Gospels. These men and women who leave everything to follow Jesus – and who end up leaving Jesus after his arrest – only to once again connect with Jesus after his death and resurrection – are (we must admit) flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable.

- ◆ Thomas who is skeptical throughout the Jesus story and who won't recognize Jesus until seeing his wounds.
- ◆ Mary Magdalene who can't recognize Jesus until he calls her by her name.
- ◆ The disciples locked in a room, afraid to go out, and finally just going back to fishing until Jesus shows up once again.

I mean, ask yourself:

- ◆ Would we really have wanted John the Baptist over for a barbecue?
- ◆ Would we really have accepted a woman who washed Jesus' feet as being justified when she extravagantly wasted an expensive bottle of perfume?
- ◆ Would we have embraced the woman who bled for over a decade and invited her to our book club even after she assured us that she was cured and clean?

I finished this book during Holy Week. And I couldn't help but reflect on the flighty, weird, strange and unlikeable people around me – on the news, on social media, in my neighborhood – and how I have judged them based on a very superficial understanding of who they are and what makes up their story. I call them ignorant or lazy, bigoted or uncaring, dirty or smelly or unclean in some way.

But as I continue to reflect on Backman's compelling story of seven "idiots" (as he calls them), and, as I continue to reflect on Holy Week, (even though it is now way past Holy Week), I see Jesus kneeling down and washing feet. I hear Jesus saying, "Peace be with you." I experience Jesus embracing disciples on a beach, offering them fish, and saying, "Feed my sheep." Loving and caring and forgiving – even though these humans are flighty, weird, strange and, at times, unlikeable.

None of us are Jesus. None of us can embrace the other as Jesus did. And yet, we are called, as sinners and as beloved children of God, to hear another's story. To listen. To reflect. To forgive. To ask for forgiveness. To engage. To be silent when needed and speak when necessary.

For my part, I repent. I repent for my judgment, for my verdict that I render without knowing the complexity of another's story, for my blindness to my complicity, for my withholding forgiveness in the name of self-righteousness, for my refusing to acknowledge my need for forgiveness, and for my judgment on who God loves and who God does not love (because, as I have been taught, if God only loves those I love, than I have remade God in my image).

So I ask you, dear Beloveds of NWWA Synod, with all of your stories, how may your stories be joined into the One Story? How may your hearts be open to the flighty, weird, strange, sometimes unlikeable (but always God's beloved) people that we are called to love? What are your thoughts, feelings, explorations, attempts, experiments? I'd love to hear how you are living into God's Holy Community of love, grace, compassion, justice and peace.

As for you, you are called. By name. Embraced, loved, and cherished – in all your flighty, weird, strange, sometimes unlikeable ways. And always, always, God's beloved.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



Your prayers make a difference! If you have a person or situation that needs prayer, please call Pr. Becky and let her know. She can alert Zion's prayer chain and/or add the item to our congregational list.

Our prayers as a congregation continue:

- ◆ For all experiencing sickness, difficulty or grief, especially Bethany, Sophia, Donna, Mark, Nina, Carol, Barbara, Kristi, Lorna and Donna.
- ◆ For all experiencing cancer especially Tammy, Brayden, Maye, Kelly and Kinsley.
- ◆ For these ministries: Lutino Adunu in Gulu, Uganda, Sol de Justicia church in Grecia, Costa Rica, Hogar Irekani in Michoacán, México, African S.M.I.L.E in Tanzania and Family Promise of Whatcom County.
- ◆ For health, endurance and wisdom for all as the pandemic continues.

May Birthdays

4 Bob Ogmundson

9 Joan Malloy

12 Kenny Sund

John Tennyson

Derek Chambers

21 Janel Black

22 Pr. Becky Langholz

Homero Jose Day

26 Norman Tennyson

28 Rev. Wendell Stakkestad



Zion has a “prayer chain”—a faithful group of people committed to pray for special needs in our congregation and beyond. If you would like prayer for someone or something, call Pr. Becky, and she will get the chain going. We give thanks for the power of prayer and this important ministry.

“May the Lord bless and keep you another year through!”



Monday Bible Study is meeting in person at 12pm. We meet in the church basement. Please wear your mask and bring your Bible. **We will not meet on May 10th or 31st this month.**



The fruit trees behind the cemetery of the church yard were in bloom during Holy Week.

Photo by Bob Ogmundson



Many thanks to Joyce Dippold and Brenda Bannerman for their hard work beautifying the church gardens. Also, thank you to those who contributed money to buy Easter flowers that were then planted in the garden. God's creation is truly a marvel!



A quick note from friends Tom, Abby and Evelyn Jensen:

"We miss everyone!

Best wishes for the Easter season."



You can now give to the ministry of our congregation on our church website: www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org. Click on the "Give" tab, and you will be directed to an online giving page managed by Vanco online giving. Vanco services thousands of other congregations across the country. Each donation is charged a small processing fee, and the donor can choose to cover this cost for the church. You can give to our general budget and also to our special ministries. If you have any questions, please contact Pr. Becky.

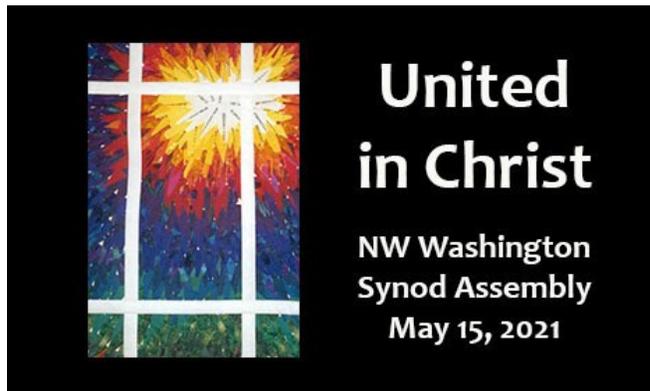


Worship is available both in-person and simultaneously over Zoom each Sunday at 10am. If you choose to come to the sanctuary, please be reminded that all WA State protocols will be in place. Please screen yourself for COVID symptoms and stay home if you feel unwell. If you have questions or concerns, please speak to Pr. Becky or to President Norman Meyers.



Here is the information to join worship over Zoom:
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/755630216?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/755630216?pwd=MVJvMktGRTFYaIVIZGNHWnFVaDRxQT09)
 pwd=MVJvMktGRTFYaIVIZGNHWnFVaDRxQT09
 Meeting ID: 755 630 216
 Password: 202352
[By phone: 1 \(253\) 215 8782](tel:12532158782)

Resources for worship and reflection are also available on our [YouTube channel](#).



The Northwest WA Synod Assembly takes place on Saturday, May 15th and will happen virtually. This meeting gathers around 400 voting representatives from our area’s 110 ELCA congregations. Zion is part of a much larger whole! The Assembly will tend to business like hearing reports, approving a Synod budget and electing representatives and committee members. Many thanks to Shannon and David Halme for participating in this meeting and representing Zion.



Pentecost Sunday is May 23rd where we celebrate the arrival of the Holy Spirit in our midst. **You are invited to wear red** (the color of the Holy Spirit) and bring a red geranium to beautify the church that day.