

THE MESSENGER

Vermont Lutheran Church's Mission Statement:

Christians **A**ctively **R**eaching Out **E**xperiencing Christ and **S**preparing His Word

From the Call Committee's Desk . .

Vermont Lutheran Church Call Committee Meeting February 12, 2023 – 11:00am

Present: Carol J, Jill D, Ron B, Pat Z, Liz H, Deb K, Ellie B, Peter A

Absent: Laura W

Called to order at 10:59 am

Devotion led by Carol J

Pastoral Coverage Update:

On-call pastoral care confirmed. Pastor Kathi will provide 2-3 visits every 2 weeks. Unsure if she is available for emergencies. Carol J will ask. If not, there is already an agreement between neighboring churches to provide emergency coverage (funerals) similar to vacation coverage.

Interim pastor: Carol has emailed Marie a few times and has not received a response. We will not have anyone hired by March. Liz will schedule supply pastors **through** March.

Gathering Phase

Results of Sunday's question – What do you need from the congregation now? -

Post-it note responses from congregation were categorized and outreach & leadership were top two priorities. (See entire list below)

Discussed ways we can accomplish these goals and how our future pastor would factor into these goals.

Need strong leadership that aligns with Vermont values regarding nature.

Committee structures/mission need to be defined and work in cooperation with pastor.

Identify which committee could be assigned the post-it note suggestions.

Next steps: Council will request that each committee meet, assign a chair, and define the committee's purpose.

For example: Outreach committee: Develop a "marketing" plan, identify ways to be more intentional about our message. Then identify 3 goals for the next year which would further any of the priorities identified by the congregation and call committee along with any resources needed. Potential date for "Committee Rally" is 3/12/23 after service.

Discussed how to identify the pastoral characteristics to meet the needs of potential future members:

Look to other thriving congregations.

Need someone members can identify with (shared values, similar backgrounds, etc).

Need someone who can challenge us.

The next focus will be on completing a draft version of the Ministry Site Profile. All committee members should fill their copy out and bring it to the next meeting.

Closed with Lord's Prayer

Adjourned 12:25 pm

Next meeting 2/23/23 4p-6p

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Highlights

IT TAKES A CONGREGATION TO SERVE A MEN'S DINNER

After a 3-year COVID hiatus, the Men's Meatball Dinner was huge success on Sunday, February 19th. We served 100 happy and hungry diners at the free-will donation dinner and raised over \$2,000 for mission outreach.

But, it takes a lot of volunteer helpers to prepare the food, serve and wait on tables and cleanup afterwards. To everyone who contributed time and effort, no matter how big or small, THANK YOU!

JANET CASTLE'S LEFSE CREW:



BAKING MEATBALLS:



SERVING THE DINNER



NEWS



St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Cross Plains, used our Gathering Place for their all-day Council retreat on Saturday, February 18th. And, on a beautiful sunny winter day, they took a lunch-time hike in the snow around a portion of the new property and used the firepit to warm up. The fact that the Gathering Place now has a restroom makes use of the facility and Legacy Prairie & Woodland more accessible for groups, like this, to hold meetings or informal activities.



Middle East Crisis

On Feb. 6 two powerful earthquakes hit Türkiye and significantly impacted neighboring Syria. The first was a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in south central Türkiye, followed hours later by a magnitude 7.5 quake in the southeastern part of the country. The two quakes devastated Türkiye and Syria, collapsing thousands of buildings and damaging infrastructure. Thousands of people have been killed and thousands more have been injured, yet search-and-rescue efforts are only in the early stages. A cold and snowy weather system now moving through the region complicates response efforts.

Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to supporting ACT Alliance and other partners in responding to these earthquakes. Mere hours after the earthquakes hit, ACT Alliance member organizations began distributing emergency supplies, including medicines, bedding and other relief items. A comprehensive response will be coordinated as the full extent of the impact becomes clearer.

Lutheran Disaster Response has been active in this region for several years, partnering with ACT Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation and the Middle East Council of Churches to accompany Syrian refugees with food, water, shelter, health services and sanitation support. The epicenter of one earthquake lies near Turkish provinces that host hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, which will only exacerbate the refugee crisis in the region.

Your gifts designated for "Middle East Crisis" will be used entirely (100%) to provide long-lasting support for those whose lives have been impacted by disasters in the region.

NEWS

(continued)

LENT SCHEDULE

Soup Suppers with Lenten Study

Come join us for a Soup Supper each Wednesday night at 6 pm with a Lenten Study discussion during the supper. Hosted by:

March 1—Men’s Group

March 8– Choir

March 15 - Women’s Group

March 22—Youth/Sunday School

March 29 - Church Council



Maundy Thursday—April 6th—service at 7 pm

Good Friday—April 7th—Community Service

Easter Sunday—April 9th, service 9:30 am



Easter Lily Orders

Order forms are due by
Sunday, March 5, 2023

Checks to
Vermont Lutheran Church



My Name _____

Telephone Number _____

I would like to order:

_____ **Easter Lily(ies) @ \$18.00 each = \$** _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

In loving Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

ELCA World Hunger's

40 Days OF GIVING

"God's invitation for us to build a just world where all are fed comes out of our own experience as people saved by grace. As told in Holy Scripture, the entire history of the people of God is the story of God being present with the people, especially when they felt alone."
Revisit this lesson in ELCA World Hunger's Lent study guide *Week Two* material.



29 WED

Even the most experienced farmers — such as Hasani — can transform their harvests and their futures with access to seeds and tools (\$50) along with agricultural training.

3 MON

Loving God, pour out your Spirit upon us, that we might face despair and death with the hope of resurrection and faith in the One who called Lazarus forth from the grave. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

6 THU

Gather all you've collected throughout your Lenten journey and add up your total gift to ELCA World Hunger. Make your donation online at ELCA.org/40Days or bring your gifts to your congregation. Thank you for working creatively and courageously toward a just world where all are fed.

20 MON



Scan the QR code to read Marto's story in *Living Lutheran!*



21 TUE

Faithful savior, open our hearts that with compassion and love we might recognize one another as signs of your presence among us, through Jesus Christ, who redeems us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

22 WED

A simple water well or other water point can help as many as 500 families gain access to clean, safe water. Consider the gift of a well (\$2,500) or a portion of a safe-water project (\$250) today.



World Water Day

24 FRI

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."
(Psalm 138:6)

25 SAT

Creator God, keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom. Open our hearts to gladness, call dry bones to dance and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

26 SUN

Read and reflect on today's Gospel, John 11:1-48. Then, read the *Week Five* material in ELCA World Hunger's Lent study guide.

30 THU

"We help because we were helped."
—Rev. Michelle Belarney, pastor of a congregation in Slovakia hosting Ukrainian refugees.
Scan the QR code to read about the Lutheran history of welcome on the *Lutheran Disaster Response* blog.



31 FRI

"My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love... [and] great power to redeem" (Psalm 130:6-7).

4 TUE

"When through the waters winds our path, around us pain, around us death; deep calls to deep, a saving breath, and found beside us faithfully there is the love of God."
—"In Deepest Night" (ELW 699)

7 FRI

"We were able to feel alive again... They gave us a grain of hope and dragged us from uncertainty to a new life."
—Rashad, an asylum seeker in Serbia, reflecting on the transformative support provided by the Asylum Protection Center (an ELCA World Hunger partner).



27 MON

"Alice's Garden is truly a pocket of paradise in an urban landscape."
—Sierra
Use March 15's QR code to read this story on pp. 6-7 in "Lifelines."



28 TUE

"All who hunger, gather gladly; holy manna is our bread. Come from wilderness and wandering. Here in truth we will be fed. ... Taste and see the grace eternal. Taste and see that God is good."
—"All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly" (ELW 463)

APRIL

1 SAT

As many as 811 million people around the world are undernourished. Your gifts matter. Keep learning about how you can make an impact by visiting ELCA.org/Hunger. Thank you.

5 WED

Christ our God, hold us in your embrace as we wait for Easter's dawn. Comfort us with the promise that no power on earth, not even death itself, can separate us from your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

8 SAT

"By your hand you feed your people, food of angels, heaven's bread. For these gifts we did not labor, by your grace we have been fed."
—"By Your Hand You Feed Your People" (ELW 489)

2 SUN

Read and reflect on today's Gospel, John 11:1-48. Then revisit a favorite hymn, lesson, passage from Scripture or ELCA story from World Hunger to reflect on as we enter into Holy Week.

He is not here, but has risen! Alleluia!

9 EASTER SUNDAY

Read, reflect on and rejoice in John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12.



ELCA World Hunger

Prayers have been adapted from *Sundays and Seasons* (Augsburg Fortress, 2022).



March 5

Genesis 12:1-4a
John 3:1-17

March 12

Exodus 17:1-7
John 4:5-42

March 19

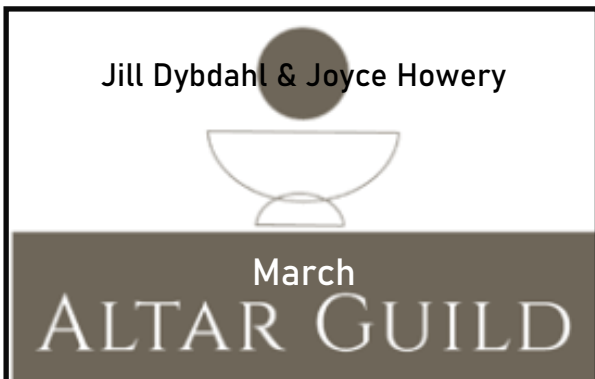
1 Samuel 16:1-13
John 9:1-41

March 26

Ezekiel 37:1-14
John 11:1-45

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

| | | |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| Heidi | Doyle | March 01 |
| Shelby | McKenzie | March 02 |
| Lisa | Parrell | March 04 |
| Anne | Donaldson | March 06 |
| Cole | Rickey | March 06 |
| Tyler | Haugen | March 07 |
| Sara | Amble | March 09 |
| Amanda | Powers | March 09 |
| Sadie | Powers | March 09 |
| David | Parrell | March 11 |
| Kent | Norslien | March 12 |
| James | Hanson | March 13 |
| Arlyn | McKenzie | March 15 |
| Alex | Page | March 16 |
| Dylan | Lemke | March 17 |
| Wes | Childs | March 18 |
| Michael | Dauck | March 21 |
| Jill | Adler | March 26 |
| Mya | Boebel | March 28 |
| Paul | Dybdahl | March 28 |
| Susan | Olson | March 28 |



Vermont Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes (Draft)
February 26, 2023

Present: Aaron T, Carol J, Wade W, Deb K, Jamie H, Steve H, Luke H, Carston

Absent: Pat

Called to order 10:45 Aaron T. Aaron welcomed new Council members.

Pastor's Report: None

Secretary's Report: Approved (Steve H/Deb K))

Treasurer's Report: (Steve) Contributions are up \$1,000 from 2022. Expenses are up \$2,500 due to timing of payments which were switched to quarterly payments from an annual payment. Added \$30k of insurance coverage for outside lighting resulting in an additional premium of \$30.

Contribution analysis to be discussed at the next meeting (Wade W/Karsten)

Call Process Update: Carol reported the call committee continues to meet on a regular basis. The group should have the Ministry Profile complete in two weeks. At that time it will be sent to the Synod for review and posting. The group will start delving into the interview process next.

Pulpit Supply: Liz has secured pastors through the month of March. It has been a challenge to find assistance for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday Services. Carol will ask Jill to reach out to Pastor Kathi and inquire if she will assist.

Lenten services: Ash Wednesday services will remain as in years past. For the remaining Wednesdays during Lent, we will focus on fellowship and offer a soup supper combined with short devotional.

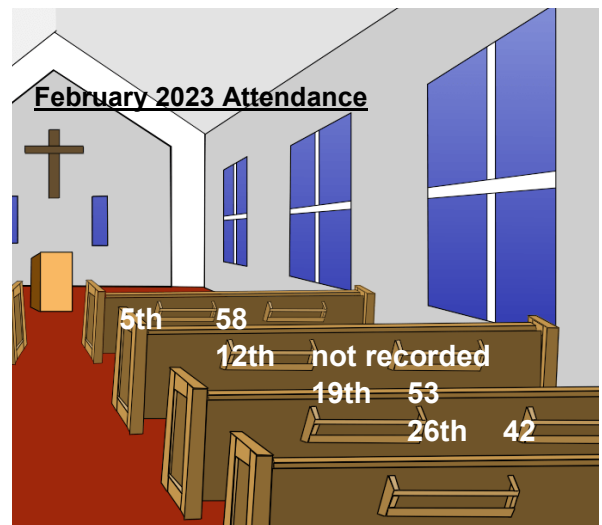
Trivia Night – April 5th from 5:00 – 7:00pm. Aaron will co-lead. Tabled until March 19th meeting.

Flower Full Moon Dinner – planning for the May 5th event is underway

Summer Picnic – Confirmed date – Saturday, August 19th. Plan to rent/erect tent to see if it works for future events.

Capital Expenditure Update:

- Pastor office remodel- underway
- Speakers are ordered and have shipped.
- Liz is looking into chairs for Gathering Space/ outside.
- Deb is working on a quote for assessing the needs of the organ.
- Carpet research underway – led by the Buildings/Grounds committee.



Fundraising:

\$2,000 was raised during the Meatball dinner. 100 people in attendance – more funds raised than prior years when tickets were sold. In 2024, there is a recommendation to start church service at 10:30am and the host the dinner immediately after at 12:00pm. No lag time for guests.

All agreed that the implementation of more, smaller events is working well, and raising close to what Lutfisk raised.

New Business:

Election of New Officers: There are nine council members, ten including the Pastor. Of the nine, four are eligible to serve as officers: Approved/Elected:

- President – Aaron T
- Vice President – Deb K
- Treasurer – Steve H
- Secretary – Karsten to start

There have been a few complaints about the exterior lighting and the “light pollution’ at night. This specific to star-gazing. All agreed that having the lights on Fri, Sat, Sunday would be an option, while 1) turning lights off at 10:00pm Mon-Th or 2) keeping the lights off entirely Mon-Th. Aaron will reach to the Town of Vermont and have a conversation.

Old Business:

Lutheran Brotherhood Grant application. The grant proposal is asking for funds to write, build, and execute a plan for how the congregation can best use the Gathering Space, the newly acquired land, and the prairie to further the mission and use in and for the community. Peter and Steve will work on draft, Carol will review and edit. The application is due on March 31, 2023.

Committees: Aaron recommended that the council address committee at a future meeting. Discussion will include: number of committees, charter of each committee and the vision for each.

Adjournment 11:47am:

Next meeting: March 19, 2023 at 10:45 am

Submitted

Carol Johnson, interim Secretary
VLC Church Council

| |
|--|
| SAVE THE DATES |
| Wednesday, April 5, 2023 - Trivia Night 5pm |
| Saturday, August 19, 2023— Church Picnic |

| Monthly Financial Report | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| February 2023 | | | | | | |
| | Contributions | | | Operating Expenses | | |
| | 20 23 | 2022 | Change | 2023 | 2022 | Change |
| Monthly | \$ 21,370 | \$ 14,067 | \$ 7,303 | \$ 12,555 | \$ 12,080 | \$ 475 |
| YTD | \$ 27,176 | \$ 18,591 | \$ 8,585 | \$ 26,012 | \$ 23,085 | \$ 2,927 |

ELCA

Living Lutheran

An ancient ELCA church in the U.S. Virgin Islands



Founded less than 150 years after Martin Luther's 95 Theses, Frederick Lutheran Church has witnessed more change, growth and conversation on the lives of African descendants than any other church in the Western Hemisphere.

By [Nicolette Peñaranda](#) | February 10, 2023



If someone were to ask you to name one of the oldest Lutheran churches in the Western Hemisphere, would you know it is Frederick Lutheran Church on St. Thomas Island? Would you believe them if they told you it is a Black Lutheran church in the New World that was founded less than 150 years after Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses?

The ELCA has an intriguing history, but a huge grip of it is the undiscussed stories found in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Members of the ELCA's African Descent Ministries team spent a week on the islands on a pilgrimage and to film an episode for the next season of ["Talks at the Desk,"](#) a Black History Month visual storytelling project airing this month on the ELCA's social media channels.

The team landed at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport in September 2022, named after the St. Croix-born Tuskegee Airman. A few days later, the crew sat down with his widow, Joyce Rohlsen, a member of Lord God of Sabaoth Lutheran Church (LGOS), Christiansted, St. Croix. The two married at Lutheran

ELCA (continued)

Church of the Epiphany in Hempstead, N.Y., only to relocate to the islands after serving in the military.

This bit of modern history is only a taste of the rich legacy that lingers across the Caribbean Synod.

The legacy begins

The islands house seven historic Lutheran churches once colonized by several countries, though most are associated with the Danes. Although originally stewarded land of the Tainos and Arawak Indigenous communities, the Danish Kingdom later occupied the stolen islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John for their own desires.

These lucrative agricultural communities soon became the cash cows of the empire through the labor of enslaved Africans who produced sugar cane, cotton and tobacco. After a six-month slave rebellion on St. John in 1733, it was clear that the production of the islands was fragile. St. Thomas, though, differed from the other islands because it became a trading community early on rather than a plantation economy. This made its success less dependent on the subjection of enslaved Africans.

The slavery context may feel out of place when exploring the historic Lutheran church until one realizes that the founding of Frederick in 1666 was only a few years before the Danes officially acquired the island of St. Thomas in 1671 and LGOS was established in 1734, the year after St. Croix was purchased from France. The Lutheran church was embedded into the culture and politics of the islands since their inception.

Both churches named so happen to be the political congregations of the time. Both settled on slightly elevated landscapes, a walking distance from the ports of trade, and previously housed in the nearby forts that protected the islands.

Frederick and LGOS both share similar architectural styles, though the latter is much smaller. The two have dynamic steps leading to the oversized front doors of the church. Inside the entrance are parallel staircases that lead to the balcony where enslaved Africans were forced to sit. One service was in Danish and the second in Dutch Creole. When Africans and Europeans worshiped together, Africans weren't permitted to stand on the main floor, reserved for the European church families. The 18th-century boxed pews had their own rankings, with particular pews reserved for Danish government officials.

The pews weren't the only place where church and state aligned. Frederick's parsonage was intentionally built right next to the governor's house on St. Thomas. The two homes sit even higher up on the hills that look out to the bay.

It was common practice that when the governor was not on St. Thomas, the Lutheran pastor acted in his place. This was in addition to the labor of Frederick's pastor also serving Nazareth Lutheran Church on St. John's at least once a month.

All people on the islands were expected to attend church on Sundays. The authority of the church was so substantial it had the power to incarcerate those who didn't attend Sunday service. That narrative is present to this day: "Frederick Church? The one that threw people in jail!" The parsonage also had particular rooms on the top floor that operated as a jail for enslaved Africans

ELCA (continued)

rebuking slavery.

Journey to emancipation

St. Thomas had a huge amount of political influence and was deeply tied to the oppression of an entire baptized community of Black Lutherans, but it was the island of St. Croix that contained some of the most significant rebellions in Virgin Islands history. Being a more densely populated island filled with plantations and slave labor, St. Croix's enslaved Africans faced more of the physically demanding and inhumane aspects of slavery.

LGOS resided on the eastern Christiansted region of the island, but a majority of farms were on the western Frederiksted region, home of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

On July 3, 1848, as Africans began to rebel and call for a mass revolution across the plantations, Gov. Peter von Scholten proclaimed emancipation from LGOS' steps, got into his carriage, and rode over 16 miles to the Fredriksted pier and declared the same, nearly two decades before the United States would abolish the practice itself.

The Lutheran church not only played into the oppression but also the liberation of a people within a 150-year span. It leads to the question: What was stopping the church from liberating people in the first place?

Emancipation brought wide celebrations on the islands, but the struggle for equality and equity didn't end there.



St. John, also a plantation economy, suffered similarly before emancipation. As the British Virgin Islands ended slavery in 1838, enslaved Africans were so desperate for their freedom that they found themselves on the now-infamous Mary's Point overlooking the Tortola shore. There, they jumped into the ocean in an attempt to swim to freedom. Stories continue today about sharks lingering by that cliff where people claim to see red in the water.

But the culture of St. John looks wildly different from that of St. Croix and St. Thomas. The intimately sized city of love has an even smaller population of residents, with less public resources than the other islands but a significant European and upper-class presence. Though this doesn't change the struggles of poverty across the island, it does suggest a unique post-emancipation (integration) story that differs from its sibling islands.

Emancipation brought wide celebrations on the islands, but the struggle for equality and equity didn't end there. The St. Croix Labor Riot in 1878 erupted after farmers tried to prevent Africans from pursuing an education. There's an irony to the fact that the Moravian Church and sometimes even Lutherans were adamant about educating Black youth, except in areas dependent on cheap or free labor, often by the same people in the church pews.

After several days of burning and looting, on top of the hurricane and subsequent earthquake and tsunami in 1867, the Virgin Islands' economic strength weakened enough to reduce the Danish desires to continue exploitation. The United States would spend the next several decades trying to purchase the islands, further expanding the American occupation of the West Indies.

A long legacy

This history has put the Lutheran church of the Virgin Islands in a very particular place. The Danish interpretation of slavery still demanded all people to maintain morally good standing among the community. Being a baptized Christian and a weekly worshipping member, regardless of race, has led to a long legacy of Black Lutherans on St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, including Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, the U.S. Virgin Islands' delegate in the House of Representatives.

Some elders have documented themselves as fourth- and fifth-generation Lutherans, dating their affiliation to the pre-emancipation church. Others in the community who may not be worshipping members have shared stories of being brought from the countryside on a trucklike vehicle across the island simply to attend a Lutheran church because that is what was important to their families.

But the value of the Lutheran church is not universally felt in younger generations. As church workers continue to deconstruct history and comprehend how slavery influenced colorism, internalized racism, the disenfranchisement of Black communities and the mental colonization of elders, younger generations struggle to relate to a faith that was used to validate slavery.

When talking about the ELCA to faithful young adults at Frederick, a woman asked, "How does the ELCA talk about colonialism?"

Black mainland Lutherans today have had to toil with this question of their faith and racism forever. Being on the mainland means African Americans have a different slavery story. Black institutions

were formed differently, and faith is not based solely with Luther. Rather, African Americans have leaned into the theology of the ancestors, those who coined the term Black Liberation Theology and Womanist Theology. Black mainlanders have the deep influence of other African American-founded traditions that impact their communities because of the interfaith relationships and ecumenism that is more commonly found in Black Zip codes.

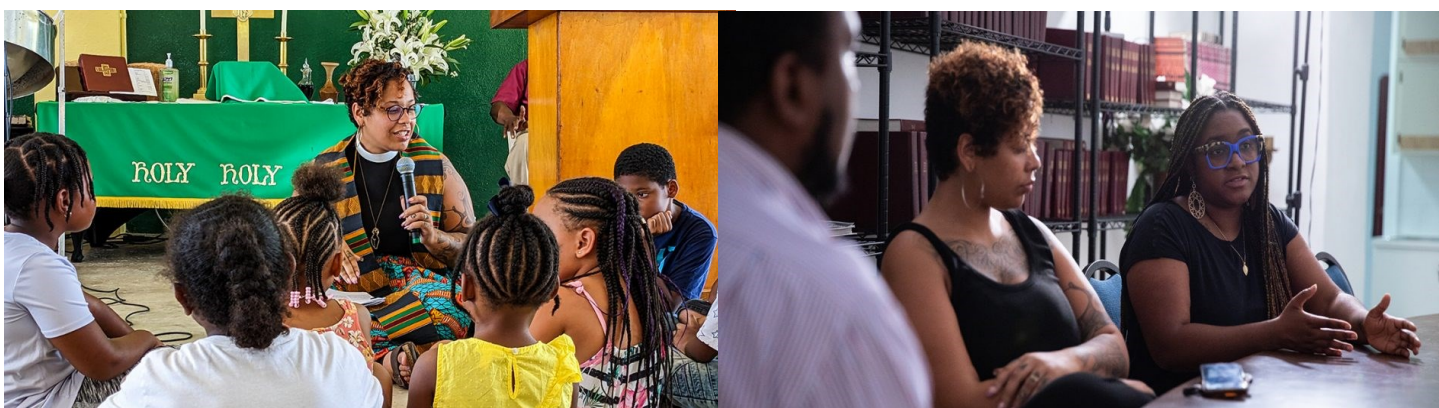
This history has put the Lutheran church of the Virgin Islands in a very particular place.

While Black and Brown communities challenge the ELCA to address racism and colonialism, African Americans have sought their own understandings of Christian faith and resistance invoked in the ancestors, as they come from generations of survivors. What does one say to a community of churches that are just starting to see young generations asking how elders reconcile being part of the incarcerated church while Black?

The other reality is that American faith is as much theology as it is buildings and locations. Church workers can't preach about being a decolonized Lutheran church if the pulpits are in the buildings that sit on top of the hills that looked at the slave ships entering port. The same way people can't claim to decolonize while being in a 1950s church in the inner ring suburbs after a fleet of Bohemian Lutherans left a downtown area because the neighborhoods were "changing."

One can find liberation in Luther's teaching of grace while still refuting the opportunity for youth to be educated or maintaining a form of economy that is dependent on people's labor being exploited. This question is not for Black mainlanders to answer to Black siblings in the U.S. Virgin Islands but rather to be in accompaniment with them as they discern how collective organizing can move the church with the next generation.

This is a witness that is not shared widely enough and why it was important for the ["Talks at the Desk"](#) team to highlight the islands. The ELCA dreams of a future church model that is new, young and diverse. But the same areas of interest are those that are already thriving in their own silos. "Talks at the Desk" gives the church an opportunity to share in this witness and reimagine our commitments to already established new, young and or diverse communities. Perhaps this is also an invitation for the church to be better stewards to the historical ministries that make the church both holy and whole.



Call or email

PRAYER

REQUEST to

Jan Cowan - 767-4616 - jancowan@tds.net
Kay Rettenmund - 767-2328 - rett@tds.net.

It is our time to build a legacy

Become a member of the Legacy Fund. Members of the Legacy Fund come from all walks of life and are united by a desire to preserve our beautiful Church, Cemetery and adjoining land. Vermont Lutheran Church owns and maintains a cemetery, historic church building, Gathering Place and 115 acres of adjacent land with a hilltop viewscape. Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given us, including accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. Therefore, we created the Legacy Fund to encourage, receive and administer these gifts.

Our goal is to generate and maintain a Legacy Fund of \$1 Million dollars, or more. Through receipt of bequests, grants and/or gifts, contributions to the Legacy Fund and investment growth will serve three very important purposes now and into the future:

1. Expand the cemetery and develop and maintain the adjacent land in a manner that maximizes its natural beauty and preserves its ecological importance; and,
2. Provide funds to pay property taxes on the portion of the adjacent land subject to taxes; and,
3. Provide funds for future maintenance of the cemetery and building and grounds needs of the Church.

Any legacy member whose contribution totals \$1,000 or more will be recognized with a brass plate on a prominently displayed plaque. Annual meeting reports will include all the names of those individuals who made a contribution of any amount that year.

March Newsletter
articles are due
April 27th

to Elizabeth Herrling at
vermont_church@tds.net

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