

The Church Mouse/Vashon Lutheran Church
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NOVEMBER 2023



The Church Mouse



Welcome, Rev. John Michael Barich, our new Care Pastor!

From the Bishop:

In the song Amazing Grace we sing, "I once was lost but now I'm found."

Because my job sometimes involves travel, there are times when I am wandering unfamiliar airports – trying to find my flight, trying to find edible food, trying to find a place to charge my phone, trying to find a place where there isn't a cacophony of sound and crowds of people. And sometimes at airports I also experience a feeling like a disconnection from my "self." Sometimes I am wandering the airport trying to find my "self." Strangely, there are moments at airports where I get this feeling as though I am unmoored from what connects me to other people. Honestly, I don't know if this is something only I experience or if others feel the same way.

There have been a slew of recent articles and social media posts written about how churches are dying and pastors are leaving and people are upset and no one goes to church anymore and so on. These posts are hard to read, and I wonder - is this a sign that we are feeling unmoored? That we are searching for something? Or maybe it is simply being lost.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells two parables – one about a lost sheep and one about a lost coin (Luke 15:1-10). You probably remember these parables – the



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shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one. The woman turns over her entire house for the one coin that is missing from her purse. I think that traditionally we hear these parables as Jesus searching for the one who needs to hear the good news of Jesus for the very first time. But I think that is a misreading. The lost lamb was a part of the shepherd's flock. The lost coin was in the woman's purse. This story is for insiders. For those who know and yet have gotten lost.

This lostness might be of one's own volition. The sheep wanders from the prescribed pasture. But it can also be something that just happens. A coin cannot, on its own, get lost. We have all experienced the disruption of the pandemic, the cracks in our government, the warming of our climate causing suffering and death, and so much more. We notice changes in our churches and in our families and in our communities. Many of us have experienced personal troubles and tragedies. These all can lead to a sense of feeling adrift. And it can lead to fractures in our church community and our faith life.

However, the circumstance comes about – because of one's own actions or because of something that descends upon us – lostness occurs. And even when we know God's love and grace and comfort, even when we know that community is important, even when we are already part of God's community and church, we can still feel unmoored, lose our sense of belonging, our capacity to trust. We can get so lost that we don't know who we are or whose we are or where we belong anymore.

I don't know where you are at as you read this article today. Perhaps you are feeling snug with the other ninety-nine in the sheepfold of God. Perhaps you are a coin cozy with the other nine coins. But perhaps you are not. Perhaps you, too, are wondering and wandering. Perhaps you, too, are feeling disconnected from friends or family or your church community. Perhaps you, too, are wandering in Concourse C wondering how in the world you get to Concourse A. Perhaps you, too, are a sheep bleating for help or a coin under the couch cushions.

If this is you, the good news is that God is a searcher and a finder. The amazing news is that God is the shepherd hiking into the wilderness looking for you. The astounding news is that God is the housewife lighting her lamp and sweeping every corner in the house to find you. You are worth looking for. You are loved and desired. And when God finds you, there is rejoicing and laughter and a party! As Dan Erlander writes, "Love is God's action to bring us into abundant life – reconciled to God, to each other, and all creation!"

In the 2023-24 course offerings of the synod's LiVE Project there are many ways to be community together and the body of Christ together. There are ways to encourage and uplift one another. There are retreats, ongoing classes, and a year-long "Abide in the Word" Bible Study. (Learn more at <https://www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project>) If you are feeling unmoored, lost, alone, adrift, I encourage you to first join in your community at your church and second, to join in the offerings in the wider synod. We are church together. We are journeying together. We get lost, and we get found, together.

Together we sing, "We once were lost but now we're found."

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee / bishop@lutheransnw.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you, Rev. John Michael Barich for your participation in worship today at VLC!

Contact Gail Larson (206/567-4779) with your prayer requests.

IFCH Dinner Program: VLC provides hand out meals at Vashon Presbyterian Church at 5:00 PM the fourth Thurs. of the month. Contact Patte Wagner: pattewags@aol.com to help.

The Care Closet, Medical Equipment/Supplies – 206-473-8715. Vashon Care Network – 206-604-3253. Email: contact@vashoncarenetwork.org; website: www.vashoncarenetwork.org

Prayer & Healing Service – Rev. Jeff Larson PhD is offering a prayer & healing service on the first Weds. of the month at 6:30 PM, in the sanctuary. All are welcome!

VCN FAMILY CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP - Vashon Care Network invites you to join other family caregivers in a safe, supportive space to share the experience of caregiving. Support circles are Thursdays, 6:30–7:30 PM at Vashon Lutheran. If you need someone to stay with your loved one so you can participate, please let us know. Join us for coffee, tea, cookies & community. ?? Contact Kathy Shafel, kshafel@comcast.net, cell: 206.718-1458 or Tory Hayes, victoriansmith@comcast.net, 206.304-4544

OUR FAITH IN ACTION**SUNDAY****1st, Food Bank Sunday****10:30 AM Worship****6:30 – 8:30 PM AA Group****MONDAY****10:00 AM Intercessory Prayer Group****4th, 6:00 – 8:00 PM VCN Board Meeting****TUESDAY****2nd, 9:00 – 1:00 PM Quilt Sewers Group****3rd, 10:00 – noon Vashon Quilting Group****WEDNESDAY****1st, 9:00 AM – noon Lutheran Quilters Group****1st, 6:30 PM Prayer and Healing Service****3rd, 7:00 PM VLC Council Meeting****THURSDAY****6:30-7:30 PM VCN Family Caregivers Support Group at VLC****4th, 5:00 PM IFCH Dinner prepared by VLC, served at VPC****FRIDAY****7:00 - 8:30 PM AA Group for Men****PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



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