

Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church,

I wrote this yesterday, the day after the inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States and the history making day of Kamala Harris becoming the first woman Vice President (and first Black and first Asian-American, too). Both Tuesday and Wednesday had poignant times to reflect on as Christians and Americans, but I just want to reflect on a couple.

Tuesday, for the first time, we grieved as nation for the 400,000+ dead from Covid-19. The words from then President-Elect Biden, "To heal, we must remember" were very fitting. It also reminded me of Jesus' words on the night he was betrayed as he instituted The Lord's Supper. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Jesus knew that the days ahead for his disciples would be difficult. They would need to remember that night and what was done. To heal, they must remember. That's part of our Christian witness and also now our American witness. We will remember the dead and grieve, yet grieve with hope, not only for the dead's resurrection, but in hope for a day when the virus is something of the past. Part of that hope is the vaccine. If you haven't signed up online or through the phone number here is the information.



<https://member.everbridge.net/730492332670985/new> or phone number 941-861-8297

The phone number has been busy most of the time. If you or someone you know needs help signing up online, please let me know. I am happy to sign people up through the website. I would just need to have them with me (or on the phone with me) to fill in the correct information.

On Wednesday at the Inauguration, one of the most powerful moments to me, was the poem from National Youth Poet Laureate winner, Amanda Gorman. My favorite part was, "If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy." We often hear the saying might is right, but we know that is a fallacy. There are times might isn't right. I love Gorman's new take on that old saying. You can read her entire poem here and watch a video of it if you didn't see it live.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/20/politics/amanda-gorman-inaugural-poem-transcript/index.html>



This week is also the Christian church's "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" (WPCU). It has a history of over 100 years where Christians around the world have prayed for visible Christian unity to fulfill Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper "that they all may be one." The week is traditionally celebrated between Jan. 18-25, between the feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul. This year's scripture verses are from John 15:1-17, with the idea of "Abide in my love...You shall bear much fruit." Today is Day five of the eight days of reflection and prayer. The focus and scripture for today is "Letting oneself be transformed by the Word: 'You have already been pruned by the word...'" (Jn 15:3). The prayer for Day five is, "Blessed

are you, God our Father, for the gift of your word in Holy Scripture. Blessed are you for its transforming power. Help us choose life and guide us by your Spirit, so that we can experience the happiness which you want so much to share with us." If you want to find more information, here is the link to the World Council of Churches website and the booklet that shares each day's focus and prayer and more information about *The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/ENG%202021%20Booklet.pdf>

I also wanted to share a note from David and Betty Smowton. Betty writes, "*Dear ones, [We] appreciate receiving the Messenger and bulletins [and] Last Sunday, Baptism of our Lord Sunday, with sprinkling outside and Pastor Ashley giving Spiritual Communion to ones like us. It means so much watching the service on my iPhone. Love and God's blessings, David and Betty Smowton.*" Thank you, Betty and Dave for such a nice note. We are very happy to continue to Livestream the services on Facebook at 9:30a on Sunday mornings.

What a week!

Take care and God bless,

01.22.2021

-PrAshley

