

Lent 2021—God's Vision of Equity

Ash Wednesday, and Soup Suppers and Gatherings

stmatthewsnoho.org/lent2021

Wednesdays in Lent, 6-7pm, on Zoom

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church--NoHo

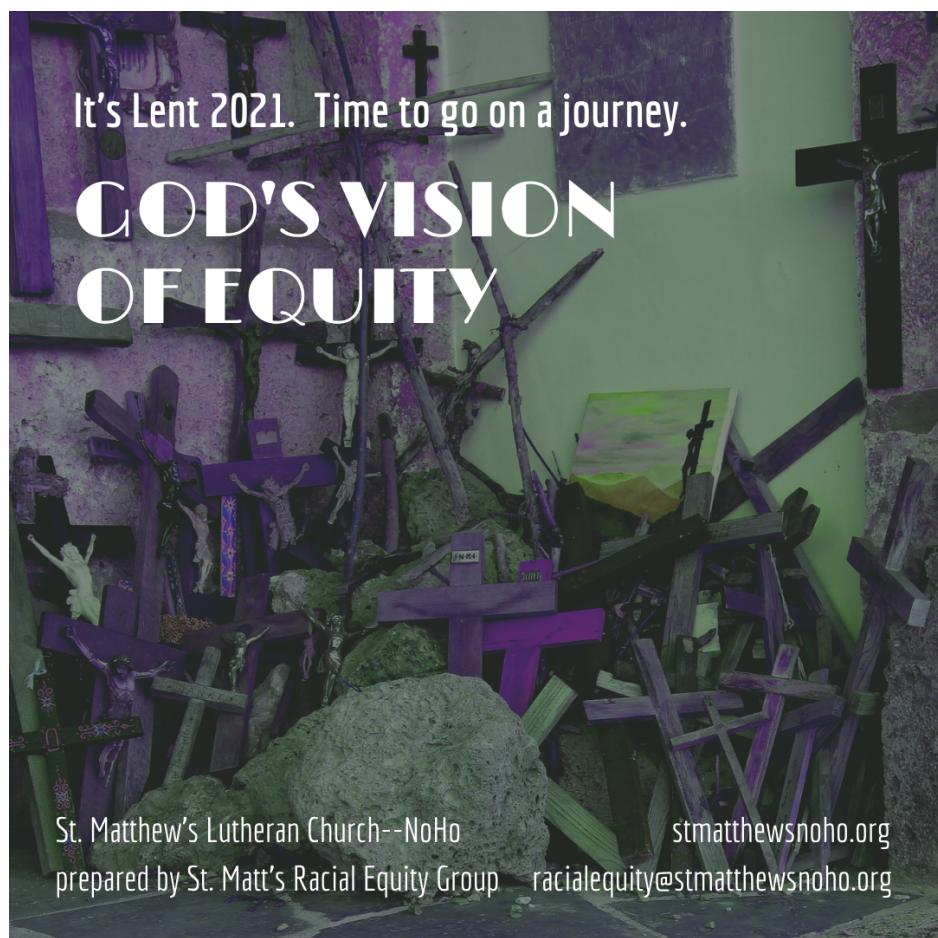
It's Lent 2021. Time to go on a journey.

GOD'S VISION OF EQUITY

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church--NoHo

prepared by St. Matt's Racial Equity Group racialequity@stmatthewsnoho.org

stmatthewsnoho.org



St. Matt's--NoHo Members: Receive a Kit for Your Lenten Journey

The weekend of February 13-14 look for a special delivery of your St. Matt's Lenten Journey Kit that will include all you will need—soup, cup, readings, ash, communion elements, images and other items—to participate in St. Matt's midweek Lenten offerings on Zoom. (Zoom Link available at: stmatthewsnoho.org/Lent2021Zoom) or Meeting ID: 882 8190 4255 Passcode: Lent2021

ASH WEDNESDAY

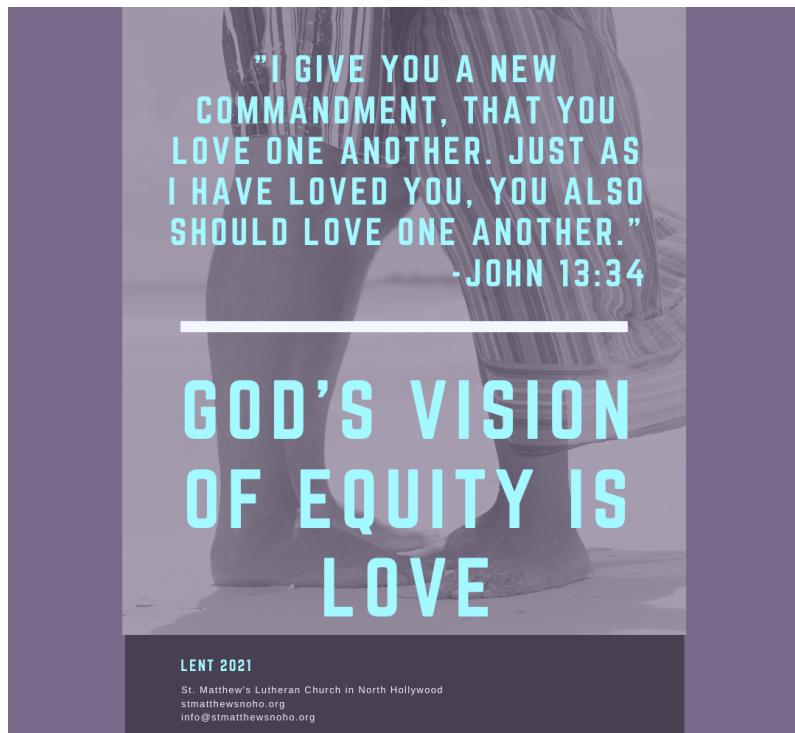
Feb. 17, 6-7pm: Ash Wednesday Worship (on Zoom) with Imposition of Ashes and Communion

GOD'S VISION OF SOUP SUPPERS



EQUITY—LENTEN AND GATHERINGS

Make yourself some instant soup in your St. Matt's mug, grab the readings and images, and log onto Zoom at 6pm: stmatthewsnoho.org/Lent2021Zoom. We will begin with check-ins while we sip our soup, then shift to Bible study and conversation on God's vision for equity and how inequities are experienced in our world.



Feb. 24, 6–7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: COVID 19 and Health Care Inequities—Making Our Bones Strong

Mar. 3, 6–7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: Unpacking Privilege, Practicing Racial Equity—One in Christ

Mar. 10, 6–7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: Disability Inclusion—The Promise and Problem with Jesus Healing the Deaf Man

Mar. 17, 6–7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: Immigration—God's Command to Welcome the Stranger

Mar. 24, 6–7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: LGBTQIA+ Equity—Wonderfully Made

Holy Week at St. Matthew's (on Facebook Live-Streamed @stmatthewsnoho):

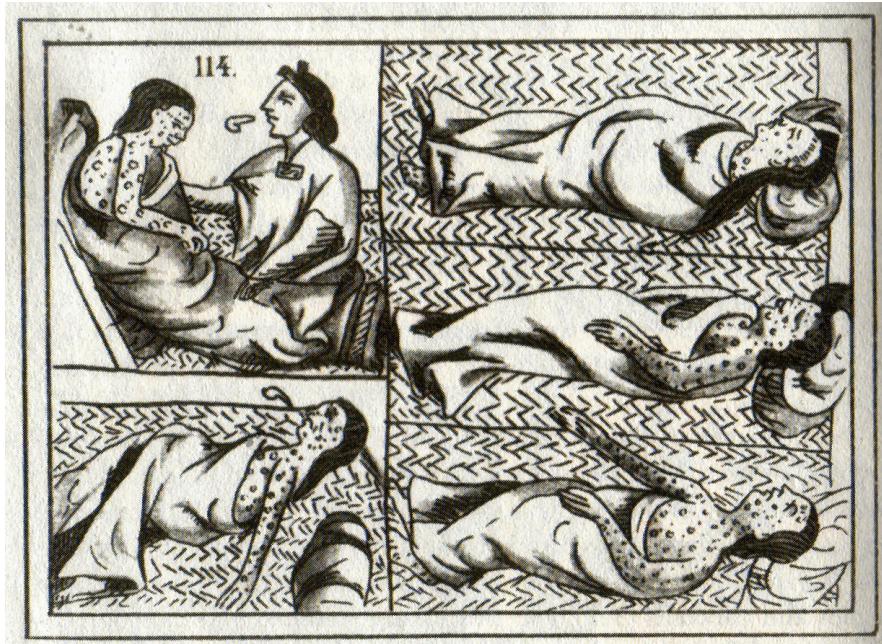
Mar. 28, 10:30am: Palm Sunday Worship
April 1, 7:30pm: Maundy Thursday Worship
April 2, 7:30pm: Good Friday Worship
April 4, 10:30am: Easter Sunday Worship

Feb. 24, 6-7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: COVID 19 and Health Care Inequities—Making Our Bones Strong

Call to Worship

"Are *any* among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. (James 5:14)

Image



Aztec depiction of the 1520 smallpox epidemic. From the 16th-century Florentine Codex.

Opening Prayer

Reading: Isaiah 58:6-12

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator^{al} shall go before you,

the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,

then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹ The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. Isaiah offers a survey of God's vision of healing and equity. What does it look like? Why do you think Isaiah labels our task to end injustice a 'fast'? (verse 6)
2. What might be some of the 'yokes' that we have among and between us that hamper our work of justice? (end of verse 9)
3. What is your reaction to the promises that God makes us in these passages? (beginning of verse 9, verse 11)
4. Isaiah says God promises to "make your bones strong." And James commands equitably "are ANY of you sick..." What does God's promise of healing and the early church's vision of equal right to healing mean in the context of inequality in medical care and access as we have witnessed again in the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. How does the image for the week connect with the theme of health equity?
6. Where do you see/experience breaches of God's vision of health equity in the world?
7. What can we say to God as we call on God to heal us and these breaches?
8. How can we be instruments of healing in the equity breach?
9. What will you do?

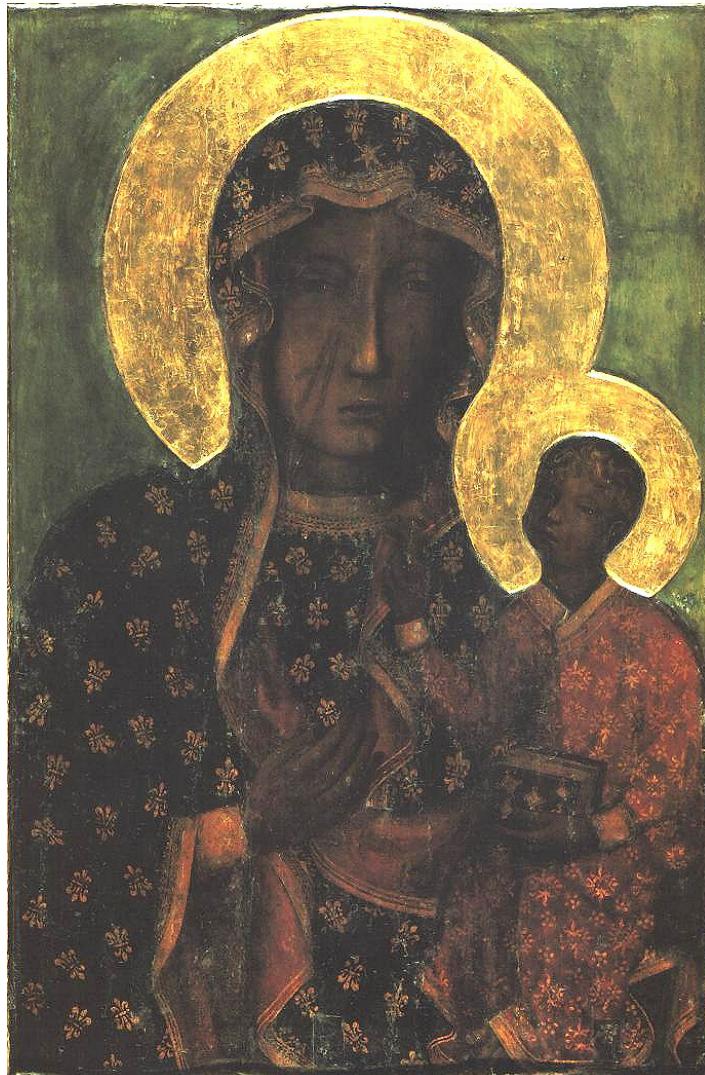
Closing Prayer

Mar. 3, 6-7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: Unpacking Privilege, Practicing Racial Equity—One in Christ

Call to Worship

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

Image



The Black Madonna of Czestochowa. 14th-century icon of the Virgin Mary. Jasna Gora Monastery, Czestochowa, Poland.

Opening Prayer

Reading

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,²¹ who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.²² The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.²³ The rich man also died and was buried.²³ In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.²⁴ He called

out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.’²⁶ Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’²⁷ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—²⁸ for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’²⁹ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’³⁰ He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. (Luke 16:19–31)

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the relationship between the rich man and Lazarus? (i.e. vs 24: text shows he knows what he looks like – knows his name ... anything else?). Abraham and Lazarus?
2. This story, with its characters described as rich and poor, addresses economic inequality. What if we redefined the characters as black and white? Black and brown? Whom would you cast as which? What does your choice reveal about your perceptions of race? What does it reveal to us about God’s commitment to racial equity? How might economic and racial inequality insect?
3. What will it take to convince us that our practices of inequity contradict God’s vision of equity as expressed in Luke 16 (see vs. 31) and in Galatians 3?
4. How does the image for the week connect with the theme of racial equity and inequity?
5. Where do you see/experience breaches of God’s vision of racial equity in the world?
6. What can we say to God as we call on God to heal us and these breaches?
7. How can we be instruments of healing in the equity breach?
8. What will you do?

Closing Prayer

**Mar. 10, 6-7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation:
Disability Inclusion—The Promise and the Problem with Jesus Healing
the Deaf Man**

Call to Worship

"Then the Lord said to him, "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11).

Image



Ethiopian depiction of Mark 17:31-37. Source and artist unknown.

Opening Prayer

Reading

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus^u ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." (Mark 7:31-37)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you view/respond to Jesus' act of healing of the Deaf man? Positively? Critically? Why? What does that reveal about your attitude towards disabilities? What does it tell you about Biblical attitudes toward disabilities?
2. This passage emphasizes Jesus closely touching another's body. What does that tell us about God's concern for human beings and the human body? How do you respond to the images in vs. 33-34?
3. Why would Jesus tell the crowd/disciples to 'tell no one?
4. What does this story reveal about God's commitment to equity for persons with disabilities?
5. How does the image for the week connect with the theme of equity for persons with disabilities?
6. Where do you see/experience breaches of God's vision of equity for people with disabilities?
7. What can we say to God as we call on God to heal us and these breaches?
8. How can we be instruments of healing in the equity breach?
9. What will you do?

Closing Prayer

Mar. 17, 6-7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: Immigration—God's Command to Welcome the Stranger

Call to Worship

"The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:34)

Image



Art by juliosalgadoart.com

Queer Butterfly (2013) by Julio Delgado. Julio Delgado is an undocumented queer artist and activist in LA. www.juliosalgadoart.com. Used with permission.

Opening Prayer

Reading

"The Lord appeared to Abraham¹ by the oaks¹ of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.³ He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures¹ of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes."⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate." (Genesis 18:1-8)

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Abraham's reaction to the three men. What do you think prompted Abraham's reaction to the three strangers?
2. What does the scripture reveal about God's call for hospitality? What does the Isaiah passage and the call to worship (Leviticus 19:34) say about God's vision for immigrant equity?
3. How does the image for the week connect with the theme of immigrant equity?
4. Where do you see/experience breaches of God's vision of equity for immigrants?
5. What can we say to God as we call on God to heal us and these breaches?
6. How can we be instruments of healing in the equity breach?
7. What will you do?

Closing Prayer

Mar.24, 6-7pm: Soup Supper and Conversation: LGBTQIA+ Equity—Wonderfully Made

Call to Worship

“For it was you who formed my inward parts;
 you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

Image

Selfie (2020) by T.J. Tallie. T.J. Tallie is a queer academic in San Diego who also happens to be Lutheran.

Opening Prayer

Reading

“When David^{1a} had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. ³Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. ⁵David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved” (1 Samuel 18:1-5).

...
“Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the relationship between David and Jonathan as portrayed in the passage. What images come to mind when you read vs. 1-2?
2. What does the passage about the love of David and Jonathan, together with the beautiful verses of Psalm 139 reveal about God’s vision of the inherent worthiness of persons who identify LGBTQIA+ and LGBTQIA+ equity?
3. How does the image for the week connect with the theme of LGBTQIA+ equity?
4. Where do you see/experience breaches of God’s vision of equity for LGBTQIA+ persons?
5. What can we say to God as we call on God to heal us and these breaches?
6. How can we be instruments of healing in the equity breach?
7. What will you do?

Closing Prayer

Thank you to all the members of St. Matthew's-NoHo's Racial Equity Group for developing our devotional materials for Lent 2021.

For more information about our group and St. Matt's, please see our website: stmatthewsnoho.org. Or email: racialequity@stmatthewsnoho.org.

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**St. Matthew's Lutheran Church celebrates God's grace through Christ,
embraces diversity, and empowers people to discover
and develop their spiritual gifts to serve as
agents of healing and change.**