

# The CrossWorks

Information, Inspiration and Invitation from  
Cross of Grace Lutheran Church

## Lessons from Zeitouna

It's been more than 200 days since Hamas' horrendous attack on Israelis and the staggering carnage Israel has inflicted in response. Hostages have not returned home. Nearly 15,000 Palestinian children have been killed since the conflict began. And that number will only go up if the impending famine takes effect in northern Gaza in the coming days. Calls for relief aid, food, and a ceasefire are ringing in from across the globe. Most notably here in the United States are the protest and occupy movements happening on college campuses such as Yale, Columbia, and NYU. It's hard to keep track of all that is happening, especially when we have the privilege of changing the channel or to keep scrolling when the news becomes too much. For someone who's Jewish or Palestinian-American though, such a privilege isn't an option because this conflict impacts their reality in more ways than one.

I imagine all this terrifying news - the rise of international antisemitism, and the attacks on people who are of Palestinian descent - creates an overwhelming sense of fear: fear for oneself, their loved ones, and fear of the "other". Fear is really the most dangerous feeling we harbor. For out of fear comes hatred and dehumanizing and, eventually, violence. And perhaps worst of all, where there is fear, there is no love (1 John 4:18). What, if anything, can cast out this fear and move folks toward love?

According to the group, Zeitouna (which means 'olive tree' in Arabic), it takes a refusal to be enemies and a deep commitment to Dialogue. Zeitouna is a group of twelve women, six Jewish and six Palestinian, in Ann Arbor, Michigan who have been meeting together for over twenty years. The group gathers in each other's homes every other week, sharing dinner, and then engaging in facilitated conversations through a model called Dialogue. The goal of their conversations is not to formulate a response, but to understand the other's point of view, creating a shared understanding, rather than agreement, among people with very different perspectives.

Irene, a Jewish member, said "My heart has been opened to those who scare me." Wadad, a Palestinian member said, "It is only through Zeitouna that I am able to hear the voice of the 'other'- her pain and her joy - realizing that it mirrors my own." This is not a political group, but rather a model of coexistence and an example of how to move away from fear and toward love. I pray that their model spreads to college campuses, communities throughout the US and the world, and most of all in Palestine and Israel, where fear seems to be at an all-time high.

For this community, I hope we are inspired by their courage to respectfully, empathetically engage with people whom they feared and saw as 'other'. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us to do the same, moving us always away from fear and toward love.

Lord, have mercy.

*Pastor Cogan*



# Happening in May

May 2024

## ***Mission Sunday • Workforce • 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.***

This month's Mission Sunday offering will support the work of Workforce/RecycleForce, a non-profit committed to reducing crime through employment and job training, while improving the environment through electronics recycling. Look forward to hearing more on a Sunday in May, yet to be determined.

## ***The Landing • Wednesday, May 1 • 5:30 p.m.***

We provide a meal for the The Landing, a safe space for young people to come to deal with the 'stuff' of life. If you are interested in helping deliver the meal one month, please connect with Amanda in the church office.

## ***Moms' Nite Out • Tuesday, May 2 • 6:30 p.m.***

Gather with other moms at El Toro this month for a break over casual conversation, food, and friendship. Check the Grace Notes to sign up and contact Chelsea Walsman to learn more. (chelseadowdell@gmail.com)

## ***World Labyrinth Day • Saturday, May 4 • 12:30 p.m.***

With faith communities across the globe, COG will gather to walk, pray, and worship at our labyrinth. We will have special music, prayer activities, crafts, and food. This will be a great activity for families with children of all ages.

## ***Groceries of Grace Food Pantry Training • Sunday, May 5 • 12 p.m.***

Our Food Pantry is switching our model in order to involve more Partners in Mission. This training will cover stocking the pantry, making up bags for families, and how we can best serve our neighbors.

## ***Annual Meeting "Q and A" Session I (May 5, 9:45 a.m.) • Session II (May 12, 9:45 a.m.)***

Gather as we discuss the Spending Plan, name prospective Council Leaders, share good news about our Mission Endowment Fund interest, and more. All of it is about sharing information and preparing to make our **Annual Meeting, May 19<sup>th</sup>**, run as faithfully and efficiently as possible.

## ***Confirmation Sunday • May 12 • 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.***

Celebrate this next step in the faith journeys of some of our younger Partners in Mission.

## ***Prayer Shawl Ministry • Sunday, May 12 • 1 p.m.***

Gather to share ideas, supplies, and to create gifts of prayer for friends and family who need a sign and reminder that they are loved during difficult times. Contact Joyce Ammerman for more information (jammerman15@yahoo.com).

## ***Racial Justice Team Lunch and Learn • Sunday, May 19 • 12 p.m.***

Learn about practical ways we as a congregation can work toward racial justice using Jemar Tisby's book *How to Fight Racism* as a guide. We will join in facilitated conversation by Pastor Mark and have lunch together.

## ***Pancake Breakfast • Sunday, May 19 • 9:30 a.m.***

The High School Youth will host a pancake breakfast as a fundraiser for their trip to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in NOLA. Join us for some scrumptious pancakes and fellowship, and look for cool ways your freewill offering will help our kids have a meaningful experience this July.

## ***First Communion Celebration • Sunday, May 19 • 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.***

Spring Break disrupted our usual plan so we will celebrate with a few young Partners in Mission on Pentecost Sunday.

## ***Agape Alliance Ministry • Monday, May 20 • 6:00 p.m. (carpool leaves COG)***

Connect with Carla Hopkins (hopkins0@comcast.net) or Linda Sevier (lsevier103@gmail.com) to learn how you can be part of this ministry to sex workers on Indy's east side.

## ***SonRise End of Year Party • Tuesday, May 21 • 5:30 p.m.***

Sign up on the Grace Notes and gather at Arv and Sharon Holdens' to celebrate another year of meaningful ministry.

## ***Summer Worship Schedule Begins • Sunday, May 26***

Through Labor Day, we worship at 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m., breaking from Sunday Christian Education for the summer.