**Green Blades Preaching Roundtable**

All Saints’ Day

November 6, 2022

Luke 6:20-31

Pastor Daphne Urban, Bethany Lutheran, Red Lake Falls, MN

Our gospel reading today, comes from the book of Luke. Jesus mainly lives life and teaches outdoors, amid birds, lilies, lakeshores and sprouting seeds. These are his popular parables in a nut shell. If we look at the broad scope of our Gospel of Luke reading from Chapter 6, for today, we can envision Jesus outside. Jesus comes down the mountain and under the huge Galilean sky, he speaks. He speaks of blessings and sorrows to his newly called disciples, and all who are around him that will listen.

Jesus at one point says, “to you who are listening I say,” which basically means that some people in the crowd are no longer listening to him. But those that are, listen up, this is important. Then Jesus describes ways in which those of us in a covenantal relationship with God, are called to live. Jesus explains in great detail that we are to love everyone, and all of creation, just as God loves us, and everything. Love our enemies. Love those who hate us, love those who curse us, love everyone around us, because everyone is our neighbor, and everyone is part of God’s creation. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus has come now to share the message of love with this world, this entire world! All of us, baptized believers are in a covenant with God. God shows us love and forgiveness, mercilessly. And we are to show the same respect to those around all, all of God’s creation around us. Treat others as you want to be treated. The golden rule.

Wow, tough stuff, right? Who is kind to everyone and everything, they meet? Are you? I want to be. I try to be, but I’m human. It doesn’t happen all the time. In my private, individual American life, I hardly know my neighbors. I’ve never even met many of them. So when it comes to following Jesus, and loving God, I’m not doing the best job of it yet. But when I go out, deep into the woods where my family shack is, I’m a wonderful neighbor to the squirrels, birds, spiders, trees, grasses and all of the nature that God has provided in that space. That is the space that I reflect, pray, refresh and renew in. Those are the trails I walk in, to feel emersed in God’s creation. All of God is around me. There is nothing manmade. I am one with nature, and nature is one with me. God’s gifts are abounding. And I breathe it all in, as I walk around and call God’s creation my own. It is my peace and it is God’s grace given to me, at a time when I need it most.

On All Saints Sunday, we celebrate the power of God’s grace. Sinners, those who are found and those who are lost, are made holy this day. God transforms us; you and me. Those who have passed away, and those who are here with us today. We are all lifted up, in the name of Jesus. Because we are holy creatures. We are God’s holy creatures. As Wendell Berry once wrote, “We are holy creatures living among other holy creatures in a world that is holy. Some people know this, and some do not. Nobody, of course, knows it all the time. But what keeps it from being far better known than it is?” I feel the joy of this day by remembering that God does not just make us humans holy. ALL of God’s creatures are holy. The saints of God and those of us still present today, human and non-human neighbors, all have a common gift from God: grace. By grace we are saved. “Thanks be to God.”

Let’s end with a prayer of Thanksgiving, written by Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918)

O God,

We thank you for this earth, our home;

for the wide sky and the blessed sun,

for the ocean and streams,

for the towering hills and the whispering wind,

for the trees and green grass.

We thank you for our senses

by which we hear the songs of birds,

and see the splendor of fields of golden wheat,

and taste autumn's fruit,

rejoice in the feel of snow,

and smell the breath of spring flowers.

Grant us a heart opened wide to all this beauty;

and save us from being so blind

that we pass unseeing

when even the common thorn bush

is aflame with your glory.

For each new dawn is filled with infinite possibilities

for new beginnings and new discoveries.

Life is constantly changing and renewing itself.

In this new day of new beginnings with God,

all things are possible.

We are restored and renewed in a joyous awakening

to the wonder that our lives are and, yet, can be. Amen.

*A picture containing text, person, indoor

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*Pastor Daphne Urban is a first-year pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, ordained in January 2022. She completed her M.Div. at Luther Seminary in 2021 with an emphasis on Congregational Leadership and Mission. Daphne has an academic and professional background in meteorology. When not in Red Lake Falls serving Bethany half the week, she lives in Bemidji, Minnesota with her husband and three children. Her meteorology and ministry passions converge in her commitment to nurturing stewardship of the Earth/creation care/EcoFaith. She is actively working to build a creation care network in the Northwestern Minnesota Synod.*

**Green Blades Preaching Roundtable**

Season after Pentecost

November 13, 2022

23rd Sunday after Pentecost; Proper 28(33)

Isaiah 65:17-25 and Isaiah 12; Malachi 4:1-2a and Psalm 98;

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Rev. Emily Meyer, Minneapolis, MN

Pollinator Pairs and Perception

What perceptions must be altered - and what spaces transformed - so that the forests and seas, the hills and the oceans can rejoice - and you and your community will be able to perceive that rejoicing, because you participated in God’s rising sun and experienced the healing in its wings?

Over the past two years I’ve been planting a small orchard on the land we steward (shout out to the Glenwood/Starbuck area!!). I’m up to four apples (if the one my spouse mowed down continues its slow return); two cherries; a peach (yep - it’s supposed to tolerate Minnesota winters - but it’s struggling, so we’ll see…); an apricot (it needs a pollinator buddy, so there’ll be another/different apricot next spring); and two pear. The second pear was planted this spring because like apricots, pears need to be planted in pairs, and my original second pear died from blight. I’m new at the orchard thing and didn’t react quickly enough to save the tree last fall. This spring, I chopped it off - down near the root ball - and hopeful new shoots came up - and then they, too, succumbed (the blight is in the roots!), withered and died. I am supposed to burn the whole thing to eliminate the bacteria and keep it from infecting the rest of my orchard: fire blight killed the tree, and now fire will kill the bacteria that caused it, so thank goodness for fire preventing the fire blight from spreading to my other trees…(!?!)

It’s a circuitous and somewhat confusing argument - but that seems to be the point. God’s work is not necessarily linear, nor is it easily predictable nor perceivable - sometimes we need a ‘pollinator pair’, a helpful counterpart, to open our eyes to the blossoms - so that we can watch for the fruition of God’s promises; we sometimes have to adjust our perception to taste that fruit as it ripens.

Malachi (paired with Psalm 98; it seems our two first readings also need pollinator buddies!) evokes my fire blighted pear tree: like it, God will leave ‘neither root nor branch’ of the sun-scorched, stubbly, oven-burned ‘arrogant…evildoers’; but the ‘sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings’ for those living in right relationships: the sun delivers both death and salve, depending upon our perception.

How we perceive the sun’s use depends on whether we have been ‘arrogant’ and ‘evil’ (that’s an interesting pairing of terms), or right in our relationships with humans and other parts of creation. Do we know how the sun will shine on us? How do we know if we are the ‘righteous’ or the ‘arrogant evildoers’? Is it a matter of our perception? Or will we have to trust God’s?

This year’s Pheasant Opener was October 15; we spent the day with a dear friend walking his family land near Wheaton (whoot whoot, Wheaton!!). The roosters were young; we’re sure several got away under the guise of looking like a hen - and they were few and far between - an unusual turn of events for the western prairies of Minnesota, especially given that the corn harvest was in full swing in adjacent fields. Birds should have been flushing constantly into the wet and predator-unfriendly cattails.

But the cattails weren’t wet or predator-unfriendly. They were caked; not just dry as in no mud, but caked, cracked, dusty earth instead of a slough.

The cattail sloughs declare that Malachi’s ‘day’ has come (again): the sun is burning like an oven and the roots and branches of systems of consumerism, privilege, and supremacy - including all the ways we as individuals and faith families participate in and benefit from them - are being ‘burned up’. Where and how, then, can we look for the sun of righteousness? Where and how will we perceive a sun rising with healing in its wings?

Like our fledgling roosters, God’s promise is often wrapped in the guise of hardship: many of us who are comfortable in the *status quo* may struggle to perceive it. It is a matter of perspective - as in, where and how are we situated? Becoming stubble, succumbing to the oven’s heat, betrayal and death - these are only one part of the cycle or one piece of the story - a story that requires a pollinator buddy to reach its full conclusion.

This would be a wonderful Sunday to use all the senses to create wonder - both as in ‘wonder about’ and as in ‘awe’. Wondering helps us shift our perception - and awe teaches us how. Let the music of whales, birds, water, and wind be the prelude/special music; let images of extraordinary landscapes, animals, and plants, actual flowers and other flora, a harvest cornucopia, serve as banners and paraments; fill the sanctuary (or be outside??!) with natural scents (that don’t assault anyone’s allergies); create a sensory walk - splash hands in water, feel flower petals and tree bark, experience wind on the skin, and tickle toes with sand - as a Sharing of the Peace[[1]](#footnote-1); let Holy Communion become a full meal, or make it extra sensory rich using champagne/sparkling cider and real, home-baked (gluten free) bread.[[2]](#footnote-2) Build in as many sensory experiences as possible - especially those new or unusual for a worship setting. Frame them all as opportunities for wonder.

Then, shift perception.

Ed Yong’s, [An Immense World](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/616914/an-immense-world-by-ed-yong/)[[3]](#footnote-3), explores the diversity of perception in the natural world - such as echolocation, magnetic fields, and ultraviolet vision - as he underscores the limitations of human perception. [Terry Gross](https://www.npr.org/people/2100593/terry-gross)’s Fresh Air (NPR) interview with Yong provides beautiful soundbites[[4]](#footnote-4). The interview alone might inspire folx to simultaneously accept the limitations of our senses and open to awe and wonder to what a different perception reveals.

Might we discover Good News where we thought/assumed/interpreted only wrath and death?

Jesus’ commentary about the Temple’s destruction, imprisonment, betrayal, and war all sounds frightening to those of us who are not living in the destruction of our cultural and religious institutions, those of us not currently imprisoned for our political activism, not betrayed by our loved ones for doing what was just and right rather than what was comfortable and ‘normal’, not living through the ravages of war. But I imagine that destruction sounds like liberation when it means systems of oppression will be overturned. This is Good News for Northern Minnesota Water Protectors and Black Lives Matter protestors jailed for opposing corporate greed and legalized inequity; for women’s rights advocates betrayed by their families; for librarians and election officials who fear for their lives because of their commitment to letting every voice - including creation’s - be heard. The rest of us - and I am first in line - we see the wars, the nations rising against nations, the insurrections (yes - Jesus lists ‘insurrection’ on this list!!), the earthquakes, plagues and famines - and we still haven’t taken a prophetic stand; we have not grasped our opportunity to testify.

PREACHERS. TEACHERS: these are our times!!! Jesus is calling us to testify, to risk arrest and maybe even death: that is what is required of us as Followers of the Way.

And even in that fearful stance, Jesus promises: YOU WILL NOT PERISH. That’s the pollinator pair to all the frightening reality of the text - and our world: You will not perish.

That sounds crazy, even unbelievable, but we can believe because we have seen God’s promises bear fruit before.

Isaiah 65 is the pollinator pair - the blossoming - of Isaiah 12: in the midst of great despair (Isaiah 12; the Assyrian despotism), God’s people learn that life is going to get worse before it gets better - then Isaiah 65 reveals the fruit of that promise.

The in-between time is often experienced as God’s anger, God turning away, God’s wrath, even: we walk the parched prairie and grieve God’s absence and inaction. But Isaiah 65 reveals that our tears flow from the well of salvation - and this is water we are invited to draw with joy. Lament and joy cross-pollinate to blossom into God’s healing, this promised transformation of both heaven and earth (which means all humanity and creation), which will usher in longevity and more sustainable and joyful living.[[5]](#footnote-5)

But even *that* fruit requires a check on perception: Isaiah 65 promises an exiled people that God will make a new heaven and new earth. But the last time God did this it meant 40 years of wandering the wastelands, feeling destitute, and learning an entirely new social structure. This might be God’s signature move: wandering in creation transforms us, reorients us, shows us new ways (see Yong’s interview): creation is our pollinator pair: God uses creation to show us a different way of living as humans - a slower, less consuming, less-work-more-trusting way.

This more trusting way is hard to find or define in our consumerist, supremacy-based society. To help us see more clearly, 2 Thessalonians conflates ‘idleness’ and ‘busybodies’. Here’s another perception switch! How can these two things be the same? My most frequent resource request is for curricula that will be really easy for leaders to teach. This “quick and easy” approach to faith formation has not worked in a very, very long time - it is the epitome of idle busybody-ness. Rather, we are called to do the work of actual faith formation - as in growth - through resting in trust, service to creation and others, contemplative practices, justice-and-peace-making - and see how our spiritual awakening can contribute to slowing down, consuming less, demanding less of others, and building more sustainable lives for ourselves, other humans, and the planet.

If we are ready to learn, creation, too, will be transformed. Ed Yong says the natural world adapts because of how we/other beings perceive it, “...beauty, as we know it, is not only in the eye of the beholder, it arises because of that eye.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Might shifting our perception be an act of participation in God’s rising sun with healing wings? Wonder and awe help us appreciate the extraordinary gift that is life, that is this one, holy and beautiful creation, that is this planet. Wonder and awe, creation, is our pollinator pair: we need time in creation to be transformed, and in being transformed, we might begin to *see* this planet into its days of rejoicing.

Hymn Suggestion: Earth and All Stars (Herb Brokering)

A person taking a selfie

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceRev. Emily Meyer (she/her), Executive Director of The Ministry Lab

As an ordained pastor in the ELCA, Emily interned in Seaside, OR, served as pastor, liturgical artist, and faith formation leader in suburban, ex-urban and rural Minnesota congregations, created and directed the multi-congregational affirmation of baptism program, Confirmation Reformation, and was pastor of Fullness of God Lutheran Church in the retreat center, [Holden Village](http://www.holdenvillage.org/). She currently serves as executive director of [The Ministry Lab](https://www.theministrylab.org/) (St Paul, MN), where she consults and curates and creates resources for progressive UCC, UMC, and PC(USA) congregations throughout Minnesota and the United Theological Seminary community. Rev. Meyer leads contemplative and creative retreats and small groups. Between pastoral gigs, she has enjoyed costume designing, choreographing, and performing. She lives in Minneapolis, MN, with spouse Brian, daughter Natasha, and two Wirehaired Pointing Griffons, Kiko and Zip.

**Green Blades Preaching Roundtable**

Reign of Christ

Sunday, November 20, 2022

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Pastor David Carlson, Duluth MN

“And the people *stood by*, watching” (v. 35). In this dramatic scene with loud scoffing at Jesus on the one hand and a contrite voice petitioning Jesus on the other, do we notice the *bystanders?* How are they, how are we, being shaped by the one whose words and actions don’t seem, at first, to match the kingly inscription over him? Many years ago, I attended Lutheran Campus Ministry in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was Good Friday, and Larry Rasmussen, a Lutheran professor from Union Seminary in New York, was our guest preacher – and he mentioned these bystanders. He shared a poem written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Christians and Pagans,” which speaks about how God goes to everyone who is in need, hearing prayers, granting forgiveness to all who call out, but it is the faithful who “stand by God in his hour of grieving.” I’ll never forget how he ended that sermon. “*Will we stand by God,”* he asked, *“or will we just stand by?”*

The same question can be asked about that which God loves – those in need, our neighbor, and the earth – toward which we also need to be converted and reconciled. When another school shooting occurs or another group of people cries out for justice, when another species edges closer to extinction or another water system is imperiled, will we stand by the earth and all its creatures in this hour of grieving … or will we just stand by? The UN Climate Conference COP27 is being held November 6-18 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. What decisions or actions might be shared? How might global convictions for the earth’s wellbeing become lived reality for us at federal, state and local levels?

Indifference, or even a lack of compassion, is not new. The prophet Jeremiah could see it in the leaders of his time. It wasn’t simply that Israel’s kings were bad shepherds, allowing the flock of God’s people to be scattered and destroyed; the root of the problem was spiritual. In wanting kings “like the other nations” *the people had rejected God* from being their true ruler. And without deference to God, misleaders became a law unto themselves with the lure of power, an attitude that even today says to us, “take what you can, while you can, whenever you can.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu once criticized the abuse of political power, saying, “This is God’s world. Those who are powerful must remember the litmus test that God gives to them: What is your treatment of the poor, the hungry, the voiceless? God passes judgment on that basis.” So also, in Jeremiah God reasserts God’s authority, *standing by* the oppressed and saying, “*I myself will gather the remnant of my flock*.” To the powerful, the One who was rejected will have the final say. And to the downtrodden, God will be faithful even when earthly rulers let us down. God’s righteous Branch, the Messiah, will reestablish justice and peace.

Yet meanwhile, “the people *stood by*, watching.” They were still watching for that king when Jesus came. Only, the popular idea of God’s Messiah tended to be more of a military-figurehead. We believe God creates us in his image, but *we often make God into our image*, glorifying ourselves and our priorities rather than God. Too often, the kind of leader we are looking for is one who won’t require much from us and let us live our lives the way we want. But *what would it mean to “stand by God”* as Bonhoeffer put it? To allow ourselves to be led not by our own desires but *by God’s passion in Jesus?* To see God, Paul says, we look to Jesus, who is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” That word for “image” is the Greek word “icon.” When we click on the icon of an app, it runs the program it points to. In a similar way, *Jesus is the icon of God*; his actions and words that we can see point to invisible God we cannot see. Because of Jesus Christ, Luther said, we don’t need to speculate about what the God behind the clouds thinks of us. *God has already shown us that decisively on the cross*.

And on that cross, we see *the kind of ruler Jesus is* – one who shows strength not in vengeance but in restraint, forgiveness rather than retaliation. Into a world that suffers from brokenness and division, *Jesus brings true healing* – in him we see how deeply God enters into the pain and suffering of the world in order to redeem it. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Prof. Janet Ramsey from Luther Seminary once said, “Forgiveness does not mean accepting or condoning actions, it is not a sign of weakness or wanting to be hurt again. Rather forgiveness is a shift from the *passive suffering* of victimhood to the *active suffering* of moving forward.” She said the process of forgiveness is taking that terrible thing that happened in one’s life, in one’s history or one’s family, gathering it up and seeing how it intersects with God’s story. And at that intersection is the cross – where Jesus shows that despite ignorance, hardship, and sin, we are ultimately in the hands of God who gives us strength to endure, working and trusting in God’s reconciling love, shaping a new future.

While the people *stood by*, watching – first leaders, then soldiers, then a criminal from the cross, shout, “Save yourself!” Yet as Jesus shows, the Christian life is not a matter of self-preservation. It is rather living the truth that we are already saved, that *we are being held by God so we can give ourselves away in service to others*. The other criminal from the cross begins to see God’s future emerging here. “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” More than a request, *it’s a confession of faith* – that Jesus is Lord, that in his kingdom what matters will be made right again. And when we repeat it, as we do in the Taize song *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*, it is a prayer for that kingdom to become a reality in and among us. “*Today*, you will be with me in paradise,” Jesus replies, *reminding the criminal and us that new life in his kingdom begins today*, that the forgiveness and peace God grants through the cross impacts how we are to treat one another *today* – as people not confined by stereotypes, socio-economic status, past deeds or misdeeds, but only by God’s grace. How might the “paradise” Jesus promises be emerging in the earth-renewing relationships we live out today?

What sets some bystanders apart from others is the capacity to *recognize and enter into the new thing God is doing*…like the women who followed Jesus from Galilee, who also become witnesses of the resurrection. At the cross, Jesus shows how far God comes to *stand by us* in our time of need, forgiving sins, and revealing God’s active suffering for the healing of this world. May God’s solidarity inspire our faith and service for the wellbeing of the whole creation.

*The Rev. Dr. David Carlson is pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Duluth, MN and co-chair of the Northeastern MN Synod EcoFaith Network. Originally from Denver, CO, he holds theological degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Luther Seminary. “Earth Stewardship and the Missio Dei: Participating in the Care and Redemption of All God Has Made” is the title of his Doctor of Ministry thesis, which he defended in 2016. Pastor Dave believes the church in general and Lutherans in particular are well suited to help society address ecological needs and the problems of climate change, and that congregations are ideal settings for modeling the kind of earth stewardship needed for a more sustainable world.*

**Green Blades Preaching Roundtable**

First Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122, Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

Pastor Greg Kauffman, Eau Claire area, Wisconsin

What does it mean to keep awake?

Welcoming the Savior in the way we treat creation

These reflections were written right on the heels of several devastating hurricanes, and just prior to the November elections in the United States. Our Gospel reading for Advent 1 urges us to “keep awake.” What does that look like, almost 2000 years after the Gospel of Matthew was written? As I meditated on the assigned texts for Advent 1, I used that question to focus my thoughts.

Scholars often note that Matthew’s gospel has organized Jesus’ teachings into 5 distinct blocks of material, with our Advent 1 text as part of the 5th and final teaching block. Using several parables, Jesus urges his followers to “keep awake” and “always be ready” since we don’t know when the Son of Man is coming. In case his original auditors, or current readers, wondered just what “keeping awake” or “always being ready” looks like in real life, Matthew spells it out in chapter 25, which concludes with the famous parable popularly known as “The Sheep and the Goats.” You keep awake and are always ready, by living out your faith serving those that are always on the margins – poor, stranger (read immigrant), hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned etc. The more I thought about this list, the more it reminded me of the 8th century prophets, and their critique of Israel and Judah. More on that in a minute.

Based on the almost unanimous consensus of the scientific community, you could add our planet to that list now. To connect it more directly to our Gospel lesson, we also know that the first groups impacted by climate change are those least able to cope with it. How do we serve a planet that has been degraded by centuries of human plundering? What might it look like to serve God by serving the environment?

I mentioned the 8th century prophets above, and Isaiah is one of the four canonical written 8th century prophets. In chapter 1, Isaiah attacks worship (no matter how well done) devoid of justice, and declares that God simply can’t endure it any longer! He calls for the nation to “cease to do evil and learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:16b-17

For a deeper dive into the prophetic critique of Israel and Judah, and by extension, us, here is a list of passages you will want to explore: Deut. 10:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; Psalm 146; Prov. 14:31; Prov. 15:8; Prov. 21:3; Isaiah 1:23; 3:13-15; 10:1-2; 58:1-14; Jeremiah 7:1-26; Hosea 6:4-6; 8:11-13; Amos 5:21-25; Micah 6:8; Zech. 7:9-10; 14:21. The “big 5” markers of a nation’s health and faithfulness is how these groups are treated: poor, powerless, widows, orphans and immigrants. I’ve been wondering if today we need to add one more – the planet!

Our text from Isaiah 2 follows, and imagines that “In the days to come” the nations will stream to Jerusalem in order to be taught God’s ways, and that weapons of war will be converted to farming implements. What might God’s ways look like in regard to God’s creation?

The Biblical perspective of the world is that it is God’s and that Jerusalem/Mt. Zion/temple are merely the footstool where God’s presence is most keenly experienced. Psalm 122 urges its auditors to seek the good of Jerusalem for the sake of “my relatives and friends.” What might that look like if we took Psalm 24 seriously, which declares that “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it…”

There is indeed a price to pay for choosing to regard this planet as God’s, and make personal and national changes to slow down or reverse the climate degradation that has happened over the past centuries. But our reading from Romans 13 gives us courage and reasons for making these changes. Paul writes that since salvation is near, believers can risk setting aside our own personal comforts and desires, and put on Jesus Christ!

How do you think Jesus Christ would choose to act in this world? How do you think Jesus Christ would choose to treat this world? How do you think Jesus Christ would respond to the scientific communities’ call to change how we treat this planet?

There is indeed a rich feast offered us this first Sunday in Advent. It is indeed a time to prepare to welcome once again the Savior into our midst. What better way than to treat God’s creation with the same reverence God does!

A person wearing glasses

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Pastor Greg Kaufmann served congregations in Colorado and Wisconsin between 1975-2000. Since then he has served as Assistant to the Bishop of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. In 1993 he helped begin that synod's Lay School of Ministry, and currently teaches its Bible courses. In 2000 he helped start his synod’s resource center and still serves as its director. He was a member of the ELCA’s Book of Faith leadership team, and currently is part of the ELCA’s Life of Faith Initiative leadership team and the ELCA’s Lay Ministry Programs leadership team. Greg is the Director of the ELCA's Select Learning ministry. Greg has written a number of the quarterly adult Bible studies for Augsburg Fortress, and recently completed a course for Select Learning on the formation of the NT. When not teaching, writing or working, you can find Greg enjoying his three grandchildren, on top of 14,000 foot mountains in Colorado, hybridizing daylilies on his farm, or visiting national parks with his wife, Diane, in their RoadTrek camper named Slinky.

1. Thanks to Rachel Casper and the team at Eden Prairie UMC who introduced me to the helpfulness of multisensory experiences as they prepared their Adaptive VBS last summer (see here: https://prairiechurch.org/vacation-bible-school/). People with various special needs find multisensory interactions to be stimulating and helpful in processing new information and experiences; it can be helpful for all people to explore in new ways. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Popping a sparkling cider or wine cork in the worship service allows for the additional sensory experiences of anticipation and excitement, and the sound and smell as the aroma bursts from the bottle.

   Here’s a simple Unity Bread recipe for intergenerational baking fun: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nNCdE_ZY0y7bV872kWwXYaHCKi2ONq4UkK5sl3Wl1JE/edit?usp=sharing>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yong, Ed. *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*; Random House; June 21, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gross, Terry. [Fresh Air Interview](https://www.npr.org/2022/10/13/1128686365/the-human-sensory-experience-is-limited-journey-into-the-world-that-animals-know), “The human sensory experience is limited. Journey into the world that animals know”; NPR; October 13, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/10/13/1128686365/the-human-sensory-experience-is-limited-journey-into-the-world-that-animals-know [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Western supremacy culture boasts that each generation lives longer than the last; proof that we are always ‘improving’. Yet, recent research shows this generation will not out-live their parents: we are beginning to decline in life expectancy due to climate change related malnutrition, displacement, hunger/drought, etc. See Schlemmer, Liz, “Duke Researchers: Life Expectancy Down For Gen-Xers and Millennials”; North Carolina Public Radio. 12.21.18.

   <https://www.wunc.org/health/2018-12-21/duke-researchers-life-expectancy-down-for-gen-xers-and-millennials> (accessed 10.14. 22); and [Kate Sheridan](https://www.statnews.com/staff/kate-sheridan/), “U.S. life expectancy drops sharply, the second consecutive decline”; Stat News, 08.31.22; <https://www.statnews.com/2022/08/31/u-s-life-expectancy-drops-sharply-the-second-consecutive-decline/> (accessed 10.14.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid.; Interview Highlights: On What We Are Missing in Human Vision Compared to Insects (https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/06/22/1105849864/immense-world-ed-yong-animal-perception-echolocation). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)