



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of October 2, 2022 (Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29)

Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

We stand at the edge, O God –

the edge of hope and fear,
the edge of life and death,
the edge of sorrow and joy.

We stand at the edge, and
we try to recall your voice,
so easily drowned out by
other voices around us and
within us.

We stand at the edge, but
our courage wavers.

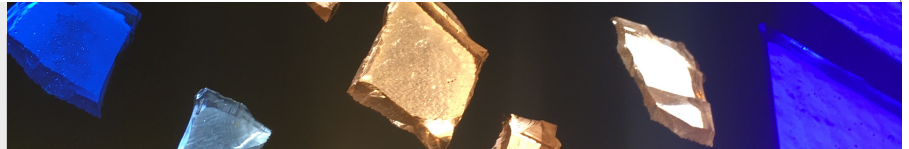
Sustain us, Lord.

Hold us when we begin to
falter, push us on when we
long to turn back, reveal
yourself in ways we cannot
yet imagine.

All we have is our trust, and
we place it in you.

Forgive us for perpetuating a
world of haves and have-
nots, for refusing to allow
others to share our bounty or
to be one of "us," for our part
in the destruction of
community created in your
image.

Forgive us, and replace our
hearts of stone with hearts
soft and open...



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The Story: Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

Context: This week we jump from Joseph to multiple generations later of the Israelites in Egypt. Since last week's story, Joseph's brothers and his father Jacob have found refuge from famine in Egypt with Joseph. The Book of Genesis ends with Jacob's death and Joseph and his brothers reconciling the hurt they had inflicted upon one another. It's actually quite beautiful. We encourage you to read it.

As we turn the literal pages from Genesis to Exodus, we read, *"Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them"* (Exodus 1:6). The Israelites growing "exceedingly strong" became a felt threat to Pharaoh, so his answer to this "problem" is to enslave them.

After Generations in slavery, ultimately God calls a shepherd in exile named Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery and to the Promised Land. Pharaoh is resistant to this, so God brings down a series of 10 plagues on Egypt, the last of which is truly terrible: God will summon an angel of death to take the lives of all the firstborn in the land. God calls the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and smear its blood on their doors, and this will be a sign for the angel to "passover" the Israelites' homes and spare their children.

...Forgive us, and unbind our imaginations to see your kingdom flourish in all its glory.

Though the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Christ we pray.

Amen.

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Compassion & Justice: Community Outreach Focus: Funds for UMCOR

Every October we raise funds for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). And this year we will target those funds toward a relatively new UMCOR initiative, Menstrual Hygiene Kits. This is an often overlooked need in relief efforts after a natural disaster, is likely a great even now in the state of Florida. If you have the means, simply contribute funds to Aldersgate and designate it "UMCOR". We will collect the supplies, and then we will assemble these kits after worship on October 30th.



The death of his son is too much for Pharaoh, and he releases the Israelites. This story is essential to Jewish identity today, and it is why they have a high holiday called Passover. And it's at this point in the story that we come to our reading for this week. As you read this massive story, listen/read closely and pay attention to places that both trouble you and comfort you.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. Why do you think Pharaoh decided to pursue the Israelites after just having let them go? How do you think of the relationship between Pharaoh's own change of mind (14:5) and God's action in making Pharaoh's heart stubborn (14:8)? Do you think Pharaoh would have pursued the Israelites anyway or did God make Pharaoh do something he wouldn't have done otherwise?
2. The people are afraid of Pharaoh's army and wish they had remained in Egypt (14:11–12). How do you think about the Israelites' fears as they faced the Egyptians? Have you ever experienced fear when faced with a difficult situation?
3. When Moses raises his staff, God separates the sea and the people walk through on dry ground. What do you think it was like for the Israelites to walk through the parted sea? Have you ever experienced God making a new way possible for you? What was it like to trust God as you made your way to an unknown future?
4. As they faced the Egyptians, Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today" (14:13). What difficulties or dangers are you (or your community) facing today? What would it take for you (or your community) to stand your ground and trust God? work and what isn't
5. Have you ever felt like your life couldn't sink any lower? How did you respond? How do you move through such seasons?

