



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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Gifts for Jubilee

The Rev. Dr. Nina Ranadive Pooley (*Sermon preached on January 23, 2022*)



This Epiphany our Gospel texts are all about beginnings. Last week we were in John's Gospel, attending a wedding and witnessing the first of Jesus' signs. Today the Gospel of Luke has us walking with Jesus as he heads homeward. After his baptism, and his time in the wilderness, Jesus walks to Galilee. We're with him when he arrives in his hometown of

Nazareth, and enters the synagogue there. When he chooses these words from the scroll from the Prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

This week, as we imagine Jesus walking into his synagogue, it strikes me as dangerous, with last week's hostage situation still fresh in my mind. It's dangerous for Jesus in his own time as well - as we'll hear in next week's Gospel. Yet, Jesus proclaims God's good news - which can also be dangerous and difficult news. God's Jubilee - God's desire that we be agents of liberation, restoration and bringing people home.

Jesus can't help it - proclaiming this message is part of who he is, he's been steeped in Mary's song from before his birth. Jesus has always known that the core of God's good news is lifting up the lowly. Humming Mary's song, Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord's favor. Jubilee isn't just for the benefit of the poor - it's for the health and wellbeing of society as a whole. When people are free from anxiety and debt, and can see the light of new possibility, the whole community benefits - that's the heart of God's Jubilee.

In this moment in the synagogue, Jesus announces himself as the one sent by God to fulfill these promises: to proclaim God's Jubilee for the wellbeing of all God's people. For those of us who follow Jesus, that means sharing in God's work of liberating, restoring, and bringing people home. We're called to proclaim good news to the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. And to help build a world worthy of that proclamation.

Yesterday, I represented our Diocese's Beloved Community Commission as a facilitator for a conversation on "Making Reparations," part of the Bending Toward Justice Annual Day of Prayer and Discernment. Truthfully, I had mixed feelings about being asked to be a facilitator. My co-facilitator, Rev. Tim Crellin, leads a Reparations Community of Practice; he's an expert in church reparations. And I am not an expert in this conversation. It took me awhile to come to terms with the fact that all I brought was myself. As I am. A bi-racial clergy person in a mostly white Church. I suppose it's a relatively unique perspective.

Being bi-racial in this country is a strange in-between place - we don't belong fully to either race, and mixed-race families visibly embody many of the fears that feed racism. Remember the Cheerios commercial? With a white mother and black father, and their bi-racial daughter - it made enough people uncomfortable to cause an uproar. That ad ran in 2013, when we had a black president, and yet a bi-racial family in a cereal ad frightened us.

When I became an adult living on my own, people weren't sure how to classify me. "Looks mostly white, but she has a funny foreign name: Nina Manmohan Ranadive." It wasn't until I married Ken

from the Rector

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and took his last name that I began to see how different it is to be considered white in this country. Now in mid-life I'm finally coming to realize the gifts of being bi-racial. Rather than being neither one nor the other, I can embody both /and.

When it comes to racial injustice and inequality, the view from the middle can be clarifying, can diffuse defensiveness, and allow people to hear one another. Being in this middle place allows me to speak as one of us - the majority held to account, as well as one of us - the minority, whose perspective needs to be heard. Speaking as WE and US - to both sides is a gift in this time of polarization.

And being us is the whole point of the Gospel. God's family is multi-racial, and diverse in a multitude of ways - bringing different cultures, perspectives, and experiences to the whole. God's family is all us and no them. In the words of Archbishop Tutu: "God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion."

That's the good news that Jesus proclaims - God's Jubilee addresses the inequities, oppression, and divisions that keep us from realizing that we are all God's children. The goal of God's Jubilee is to lift everyone up with dignity and compassion so we all benefit from the wisdom, perspective, and gifts each of us brings. And there is no us and them, but only God's own.

We are each empowered by God's Spirit; we're given gifts, perspective, and wisdom, for the wellbeing of all people. When we use our particular gifts to participate in proclaiming God's Jubilee – everyone benefits. Grace upon grace.

Beloved Ones, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon us because God has anointed us to bring good news to the poor. God has sent us to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.' Together, may we proclaim in word and deed the year of the Lord's favor. Amen.



Photo by Clay Banks, Unsplash

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
Anything can be made, any sentence begun.
On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,
Praise song for walking forward in that light.



Elizabeth Alexander

Happy Valentine's Day

February

Happy Birthday:

- 2 Sarah Moon
- 4 Derek Bodenstab
- 5 Edward Hughes
- 6 Angelina Pierce
- 8 Anna Hassan
- 12 David Ekstrom
- 13 Judith Culver, Anne Marcure
- 14 Landon Wilson
- 15 Maxwell Plankey
- 17 Henry Biegel
- 18 Mackenzie Ellis, Roy Stillman
- 19 Sophia Wilson
- 22 Robert Reynolds
- 23 Diane Forsyth
- 25 Douglas Demary, Terry LeClair
- 27 Veronica Fenton, Dawn Mathes
- 28 Lois Symonds

Happy Anniversary:

- 3 Patrick & Danielle Shaw
- 5 Henry & Constance Biegel



Financial Update

submitted by Leah Luczynski, Treasurer

In the month of December our operating revenue was \$28,995. Our operating expenses totaled \$36,351. This put us underbudgeted for the month by \$4,636. We are \$51,533 overbudget for the year. We had budgeted a deficit of over \$107,000 in 2021. We did not take any money from the endowment to offset the current deficit of \$51,533. There was a surplus in our savings account from 2020 that we moved to checking.

Below are graphs showing the average 4th Quarter income and expense patterns from 2018-2020 as compared to 2021.

If you would like to see a full itemized report of the income, expenses, savings accounts, and the balance sheet, please feel free to contact Leah Luczynski directly e: leah@leahinteriors.com or ph: 413.464.9333

