

Say His Name: George Floyd by Tracy Fairfield

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“On May 26, 2020, White Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt for 9 minutes and 29 seconds on the neck of George Floyd, a Black man, which ended his life. In the hours, days, and weeks that followed, Holy Trinity [Lutheran Church] found itself at the heart of the explosive response to this brutal killing and the centuries of trauma that preceded it. By now the whole world knows the story.”

While I attended the DOTAC Conference, my site visit inadvertently got changed at the last minute, and I was redirected to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, where I learned and felt more than ever imaginable about this horrific point in USA history.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, near the 38th Police Precinct opened as a medical emergency building for the uprising for the whole week in May 2020 when George Floyd was murdered. They had a board meeting to make this decision, right in the midst of Covid. It was the shortest board meeting ever – 30 minutes. They all agreed it was the right thing to do, to open for the community in need. When they announced to the medical professionals they were opening, the community was worried about getting blood from rubber bullets and milk from treating tear gas, on the church tables and carpets. How astonishing, when in churches I've circled with, we are more concerned about coffee stains in the sanctuary, and children's snack crumbs on the floors! But this was real: blood, sweat and tears. Jesus' blood I say, brought into the walls of this sacred space. Jesus' ministry truly at work.

So they flung open the doors, a place of solace, and a place for trauma. Light was streaming out, the doors, beckoning the neighbours in the suffering community to remind them they could seek help at Holy Trinity. This church was a symbol of hope during these days and nights. You couldn't actually see all the fires

happening around them, but you could feel it. So much destruction; seething of centuries old explosion, percolating within the black communities. A veil had been removed. Embers and debris and ash were raining down on church property. The post office across the street burnt down, and Holy Trinity was advised to close, but they did not. They defied all odds, and not one spark touched this sacred building, doing sacred work.

Holy Trinity continued to be a gathering place of resources and support. All the local grocery stores were burned down or damaged and unable to serve the public. Outreach had to happen. News was making its way all over the world and all sorts of individuals and churches were contacting Holy Trinity asking how they could help. The simple answer they gave: Pray for us. And lo and behold, prayers were answered! Carloads of food, diapers, water and other essential needs started to show up at the church. As well as being a church treating emergency personnel inside, they were now responding to the aftermath of a lost community, so huge, so damaged, on the outside sidewalks.

Remember, this wasn't just a time where the community was facing the George Floyd uprising, but there was the danger and risk of Covid. One of the ministers on staff was eight months pregnant when they opened the doors for refuge and solace and hope and healing. She just had to be there for her people; for her community; for her faith beliefs. She walked the streets – amidst Covid, ashes, smoke, and danger – putting her soon to be born baby's health at risk, but that's what it meant to her to truly follow Christ.

The world was seeing this, but sadly, not enough. Covid was taking up more attention on the news in my home area. I never knew it was as bad as it truly was in Minneapolis. The USA was fervent with coverage, the topic pungent. I am grateful to have had my site visit changed because my eyes never would have been exposed to this rich opportunity and learning. Imagine your church being closed due to Covid one day, only doing virtual worship, and then 24 hours later boarding widows and opening up for the medically wounded amidst what looks like warfare, well, it's reminiscent of the New York City church across from the twin towers during 9/11 and how their ministry changed in an instant too. Takes solid faith leaders to be able to see the forest for the trees and respond to the

justice, pastoral care and outreach that is truly needed in a time that truly demands it.

A participant in our site visit closed our time saying it reminded them of scripture, where “On this rock I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16: 18). Amen. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church was spared, and spared so they could truly respond to George Floyd’s call, and be the hands of justice he so desperately needed.

To watch the full video that holy Trinity Lutheran Church recorded in response to this uprising and their shift in outreach, please visit: <https://htlcmpls.org/george-floyd/> It will be a true eye-opening event, at least I hope it will be, as was for me.

- Submitted by Tracy Fairfield