



NEW SCANDINAVIA LUTHERAN CHURCH JUNE NEWSLETTER 2025

In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart... I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up to the heavens, I think that it will all come right... In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

It was my seventh-grade language arts class and we were given our next book to read. I had heard stories from my mother about this Jewish girl, my age, who died in a concentration camp, but reading her story, the last years of her life, made me think. The truth is that the whole story was confusing as I never had to hide from the authorities. I never had to worry about how I looked or what religion I practiced. I could walk down the streets of town and not worry about being arrested. The story was confusing, and I didn't know what it really meant or what I was to do with it.

A couple of years ago, as I was preparing for a long drive, I looked for a couple of audio books to listen to on my trip and *The Diary of Anne Frank* caught my eye. I wanted to reread it and wondered if I would hear the story differently, some 40+ years later. Would I hear the "sounds" within the story? Would my heart hear the people downstairs, bombs out the windows, and the cries of people differently today? The answer is yes.

This has been on my mind because this year is the 80th anniversary of Anne Frank's death and her birthday is June 12th (it would be her 96th birthday this year). This has been on my mind because of all that is happening in our country right now in the treatment of "others". This has been on my mind as I was in a conversation a few weeks ago, with an immigrant from Central America, who has all the appropriate documentation and who was in tears as she told me the daily fears for herself and her family. This has been on my mind as I hear stories of the CECOT, the terrorism "confinement" prison in El Salvadore. This has been on my mind as I read and reread the Gospel over and over about God's love for everyone and Jesus' comment in Matthew 25:

'I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴ *"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'*

⁴⁵ *"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'*

I have been thinking about the many people during the holocaust, who saw what was happening but were afraid to speak out. I have been thinking about the many people who witness horrible acts against another person but are afraid to say anything. I have been thinking about the wrongs happening before my eyes and try to figure out how to live as a Christian, as one who believes in what Jesus says about our

neighbors. How do we live into our title of Christian and ignore what is happening to strangers we see in our community or on the news? How do we live into our Christian identity when Jesus commands us to love and care for our neighbors and yet we sit back and wait for someone else to step forward.

The following was written by a German Lutheran pastor, Martin Niemoller, who, along with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was arrested for being part of The Confessing Church that, along with other things, spoke out against the Nazi regime. He was sent to Dachau concentration camp and narrowly escaped execution. After his imprisonment, he expressed his deep regret about not having done enough to help victims of the Nazis. He is most famously known for the following poem:

First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out
because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me and there was no one left
to speak out for me

God's peace be with you.

Pastor Sara