

On the mind of the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Jung-Chul Lee...

My son graduated from “Junior Kindergarten” today. To be honest, I did not know until recently that there was such a thing as “Junior Kindergarten.” Last year, he graduated from “Pre-K,” which is of course “Pre-Kindergarten.” But I confess, I still don’t know what the difference is between “Pre”-Kindergarten and “Junior” Kindergarten. If he starts Kindergarten next year, isn’t “Junior” still “Pre”? And while we’re at it, which of these various levels are “pre” “school”?

I probably need a professional to explain it to me...

I used to be one of those people who rolled my eyes at pre-school “graduations.” This may sound a little silly, but I think in the back of my mind I had the voice of Michael Jordan reaming out his teammates for celebrating their Eastern Conference championship—which, though the “finals” for the “conference,” is still one round short of the championship for the entire league. If you watched the gripping (and at times inspirational, and certainly complicated) docuseries *The Last Dance*, you may have gotten a glimpse of what I mean. “We haven’t won anything yet!” Jordan proclaimed to his teammates. Behind my “eye rolls” was the idea that it somehow cheapened “real” graduation (i.e. what you did after high school or college) if “graduation” took place yearly, and especially if they took place between the various preliminary levels of pre/junior-kindergarten/school.

I’ve changed my mind on that in recent years. Part of that change was purely visceral. You can’t see your three (or four...or five...) year old get giddy with the joy of being recognized and not feel butterflies in your stomach. But there’s something else I’ve started to realize as well—namely, the deep value and importance of regular celebrations which mark the passage time, and help us consider all that has been accomplished.

In addition to the opportunity to dress him in a cute outfit—and lavish him with balloons, and flowers, and way too many sweets—here’s something else this day offered: *memory*. As I woke him up for school this morning, I remembered waking him up for his first day of school back in August, and for this same celebration one year ago. I remembered taking a photo of him in front of the same bookcase, and going to the same Party City and flower shop for his gifts, and visiting the same City Diner (on Broadway & 90th) afterwards for his celebration meal.

And then I thought of what was different in all those same moments. We lived in a different home. I was in between jobs. We didn’t know any of you. We had harsher contact tracing, distancing, and masking requirements for last year’s celebration. This year, it felt (almost) normal again.

In between those memories were a lot of other days and a lot of other moments. Some were really wonderful. Some were really hard. Many were a mixture of the two. Perhaps the greatest sum of those moments were simply mundane—just putting one foot in front of the other, and getting through the next thing, until the next thing arrived.

In nearly all of those moments, I didn’t see the change that was happening. Today, I did. My son is taller. We are all happier. And as waters of the pandemic are (hopefully) beginning to recede, it feels almost as if the world is starting to breathe again...

Psalms 121 tells us that the God who watches over us “neither slumbers nor sleeps”—that our God watches over all our life, both the “comings and goings,” both “now and forevermore.” If you’re like me (read: *impatient*) you can sometimes wonder where God is in the midst of all the wonderful and the hard and the mundane moments. *Why is so much happening? Why isn’t more happening? What is God going to do about all of it?* For those of us who wonder in this way, our Scriptures bear incredible good news. God is always at work on our behalf—even when we don’t feel it, see it, or see the fruits of that labor immediately. Sometimes, it’s only through the passage of time that we see just how much God was doing all along...

I’m thankful for a day like today—which allowed me to stop, look back, be reminded of all that God has been doing all along. And I pray that, wherever you are today, you might take a moment to pause, look back, and somehow find a way to see God’s faithfulness to you, too.

Nate+

READING SCRIPTURE WITH THE CHURCH FATHERS – Wednesday, June 15

7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Join the Rev. Nathaniel Jung-Chul Lee, PhD for a course on Christopher Hall's *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*. Learn how these early Christians – including their world, their perspective, and their interpretation of Scripture – can help us grasp the deep roots of what has grown into the faith we practice today. Starting June 15, classes will be held on four consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Zoom. All are welcome, even if you haven't read the book. Contact Nate at nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org with any questions.

ST. GEORGE'S CHORAL SOCIETY CONCERT – Saturday, June 18

7:00 to 8:00 p.m. St. George's Choral Society offers a FREE Summer Choral Festival Concert at Incarnation. Music of Gabriel Fauré. Go to stgeorgeschoralsociety.org/concerts to learn more.

INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST – Sunday, June 26

11:00 a.m. Members of the Eighth Grade Confirmation Class will lead us in an "Instructed Eucharist," offering short narrations explaining the significance of various parts of the liturgy. This Instructed Eucharist will help us understand and enter more fully into the celebration central to our Christian worship in the Anglican tradition.

SIGN UP FOR A SUMMER SMALL GROUP

Our summer small group series begins in July and will focus on *Being Disciples* by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury. In this book, Williams turns his attention to what is required for us to continue following Jesus and growing in faith. In doing so, it asks questions about holiness and the virtues, forgiveness, and how to maintain faith and a spiritual life in the midst of the world we live in today.

Small groups will meet weekly for three consecutive weeks, and there are already three small groups to choose from:

- **Tuesdays**, 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Zoom (begins July 11)
- **Wednesdays**, 4:00-5:00 p.m. on Zoom (begins July 12)
- **Thursdays**, 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the Parish House (begins July 13)

Contact the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee if you would like to participate in one of these lay-led small groups or to suggest another time and day of the week for creating an additional group.

WEEKDAY WORSHIP AT INCARNATION

Wednesday Holy Eucharist: Join us each Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. for this Rite I spoken service of Holy Eucharist, which includes a brief homily and organ music.

Thursday Candlelight Communion: Join us each Thursday at 6:15 p.m. for Candlelight Communion, a service of Holy Eucharist that incorporates chant and silence as well as elements of contemporary worship. This service is informal and contemplative, with music led by a Cantor and a brief reflection by one of the clergy. You can also stream this service at youtube.com/churchoftheincarnation.

Daily Office: Services of Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/worship.

To receive access information for offerings held via Zoom, join our email distribution list by filling out the yellow Connect Card found in your pew or signing up through our website.