

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

My last Sunday at Incarnation is just about one week away.

When all is said and done, I'll have worked here almost exactly three years (I think, technically, three years and three days). It's a cliché, but it seems like both way shorter and way longer than three years. I suppose one reason it seems shorter is that my position here was only half-time. So, half of my time the past two years has been taken up in commitments to my other church work and university teaching. What that's sometimes meant is that I haven't been as present here as I would have liked. I hope I can be forgiven this on the way out.

At the same time, it's also felt like way longer than three years. One reason for that, I'm sure, is how deeply I've come to know and love you. As I think of the people--of you--who I'll be leaving behind, it seems surprising to think: "I've only known them three years?" There are many with whom I have come to feel like I've shared whole lives.

Another, perhaps less obvious (from the outside) reason it's felt like more than three years has been in how much has happened to me in my personal life, and how much I have personally changed. I won't go into too much detail, but I recently stumbled across an old e-mail correspondence that, when I read it, and heard my voice in it, I was sure was something I had written some years ago. Come to find out, it was February 2023. I had also written what I had written in that correspondence after a particularly difficult personal crisis. In my memory, given how much has changed, I had at best thought that the crisis was much longer ago than a year, and really, had all but forgotten the crisis had taken place at all.

That struck me. At the time, the crisis was all consuming. At the time, I was afraid the crisis would lead to the loss of the things I cared about most in this world. At the time, it was tied up in events that sometimes felt like they would never end. Yet here I am, on the other side of it, with only the thinnest recollections that it ever took place--about to start a brand new chapter, brimming with excitement, and joy, and above all, hope.

Life is often like that, isn't it?

In November of 2021, shortly after moving into the Parish House, I bought a piece of artwork to go above my kitchen table. The piece overlays the key words from that old Churchill quote--"if you're going through hell, keep going"--on a photo of Muhammad Ali doing a training run. Ali also famously said: "The man who views the world at 50 the same way he did at 20 has wasted the last thirty years of his life." I look at this piece most mornings as I sip my coffee and prepare for the day.

When I hung this piece, I had a lot of people sharing the Churchill quote with me. A friend had also given me a card with the Ali quote on it. I remember thinking to myself at one point: "You keep going you jerk [NB: I didn't say "jerk"], I'm too busy going through hell." But over time, it became hard to do deny the reality that, oftentimes, that's all there is to do--put one foot in front of the other, and keep moving forward....

And so I did, and here we are.

I don't know where you are today. I imagine that some of you are going through your own personal "hells." Or if you aren't, you have sometime recently. Or if you haven't, or even if you have, you will sometime (again) soon (I'm under no illusions that things will be all sunshine and rainbows for me from here on out).

But if there are any lessons for me in this transition, it's these two things. First, *keep going*. The God who has made you, the God who loves, and the God who sustains you even now, will hold you close and carry you through. A day will come, perhaps sooner than you think, when whatever you're facing today will be a distant memory. Know that. Trust that. And rest in the arms of one who will never, ever fail.

Second, on the other side of that grief, you may find--you may even *hope* to find--that that *the crisis was a gift*. You may find, in other words, that the most important and lifegiving transformation you will ever experience will come from this crisis. Now, I hasten to say--I don't say this lightly. If these crises are for you anything like they were for me, they are searingly painful. But as C.S. Lewis once said: "God whispers to us in our pleasure...but shouts to us in our pain." And I have found that to be true. At the end of the day, at the end of these three years, I am a 41-year-old man that sees the world very differently than I did at 38. These years have not been wasted.

And I pray, whatever you may be going through, that the same might be true for you.

Nate+

TODAY AFTER CHURCH

Visitors are invited to pick up a welcome bag at the back of the church. All are welcome to Coffee Hour in the Parish House following the 11:00 a.m. service.

12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Come to the Assembly Hall to help make sandwiches and pack lunches for Ecclesia Ministries of New York, which serves those who are food and housing insecure. The Rev. Canon Deacon Denise LaVetty serves an Ecclesia congregation that currently worships in the courtyard of Church of the Transfiguration (29th Street, between 5th and Madison) every Sunday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Parishioners are also invited to attend this 2:00 p.m. service of Holy Eucharist and then distribute the lunches.

12:30 to 2:00 p.m. Vestry meets in the Parish Dining Room.

COMMON CHORD CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We reached our \$800,000 goal in the Common Chord capital campaign. Now let's shoot for our \$900,000 "stretch" goal!

- Number of pledgers/donors: **116**
- Total amount pledged: **\$806,681**
- Total amount received: **\$494,430**

Will you help keep the momentum going? Pick up a campaign brochure and pledge card at the back of the church or go to givingsites.com/commonchord to learn more.

THIRD THURSDAY RETURNS!

Thursday, September 19, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Join us for our first "Third Thursday" of the program year, when we'll gather in the Assembly Hall for refreshments and a talk by Shishye Thompson, author of *The Street Church Movement: Nameless Women of GB Road*. Shishye will speak about evangelism beyond the walls of the church, sharing from his experience of ministering to women prostituted in the red-light district of GB Road in New Delhi — an area associated with violence, abuse, organized crime and human trafficking. Sishye will also guest preach at our 6:15 p.m. service of Candlelight Communion.

CELEBRATING THE REV. DR. NATE LEE

We recently announced that the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee has been called as Priest-in-Charge at St. Paul's Church in Brookfield, Connecticut. His last Sunday with us will be **September 22**. Please save the date so that we can wish Nate and his family Godspeed and thank him for his ministry among us. Nate will preach at the 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services, and we'll have an extra celebratory Coffee Hour that day. **If you would like to bring a dessert or hors d'oeuvre to share, please drop it off at the Parish House between 9:45 and 10:00 a.m. next Sunday.**

JOIN A RENEWAL GROUP!

Beginning Monday, September 30

The Incarnation clergy are creating a five-part video series based on the five vows of the Baptismal Covenant:

1. Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
2. Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
3. Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
4. Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
5. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

We are in the process of forming lay-led small groups to watch the five videos over five weeks and discuss them. We are currently planning both in-person and Zoom formats at the following dates and times:

- Mondays @ 7:00 p.m. in the home of Anne Tong (located in Murray Hill) beginning Sept. 30

- Mondays @ 7:00 p.m. on Zoom beginning Sept. 30
- Thursdays @ 7:15 p.m. in the Parish House beginning Oct. 3
- Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. in the Parish House beginning Oct. 6

We'll conclude our study just in time for All Saints Sunday, November 3, when we will renew our baptismal vows in church. Email the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee (nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org) if you would like to join a small group. Groups will be kept small to provide space for discussion, and if we fill up these groups, we will add more!

20s/30s SEND OFF FOR NATE

Wednesday, October 2, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The 20s/30s Group will meet at Bryant Park to thank the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee for his leadership in young adult ministry and wish him well as he prepares to take up a new call. We'll gather on the lawn picnic style. RSVP to the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser (adannhauser@churchoftheincarnation.org), and feel free to bring snacks or drinks to share.

MINISTRY FAIR

Sunday, October 6, 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Join us for a Ministry Fair! Come hear from lay leadership about all the ways you can serve Christ at Incarnation. Ministries include:

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| • Altar Guild | • Hour Children Committee |
| • Christmas Fair | • Lay Readers and Chalice Bearers |
| • Church Tour Guides | • Moravian Open Door Committee |
| • Ecclesia Ministries | • Operation Santa |
| • Hospitality Committee | • Usher Corps |

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING – HYMNAL DEDICATION

As our organ is being restored, we've expanded our singing repertoire with hymns from the African American and gospel traditions, which the Episcopal Church has gathered together in "Lift Every Voice and Sing II" (LEVAS). We've purchased copies of LEVAS for the pews, and you're invited to dedicate a LEVAS hymnal to honor someone special or a special occasion. The dedication cost is \$25 per hymnal, and there will be a book plate placed on the inside cover to note the dedication as well as the donor.

To donate \$25 and dedicate a hymnal, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/donate and select "Lift Every Voice and Sing" from the dropdown menu. Be sure to type your dedication in the memo line. We'll debut our new LEVAS hymnals in worship on **Sunday, October 20!**

EVERY WEEK AT INCARNATION

Sunday Bible Study: Bible Study is held in the Parish House from 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. Join us next Sunday for the second in a four-part series on the Babylonian Exile. Led by the Rev. Greg Morgan.

Sunday School and Nursery Care for Children: During the 11:00 a.m. service, children ages 3 to 9 (pre-K through 4th grade) depart the service with their teacher for Sunday School in the Parish House. Learn more about Family Ministries at Incarnation, including offerings for older children, on the church website.

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 healing prayer with holy oil.

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 and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/worship.