

*Fr. Greg Larkin:*

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## I. Come And See

A. As Jesus was beginning his ministry, he started calling his Disciples.

1. In our Gospel reading, we heard how He found **Philip** and said, “Follow me.”—And **Philip** does just that.

2. And the first thing **Philip** did as a follower of Jesus is to **go and tell someone else**; in this case, his friend **Nathaniel**.

3. Now, **Nathaniel** was hesitant—he had doubts about this new teacher—so **Philip** gave him this advice: “**Come and see.**”

4. “**Come and see,**” —remember this is John’s Gospel we’re dealing with—and to “**SEE**” in John’s Gospel means to **perceive through faith**.

5. And Christians have been doing that ever since.

B. “Come and see,” the visionaries of the Lutheran and Episcopal churches said to one another as early as 1935, as the seeds of “Called to Common Mission” were being sown.

1. Through the ensuing years of dialogue, scholars of both churches worked tirelessly to try to bring these two churches into unity with one another—the kind of unity Jesus prays about elsewhere in the John’s Gospel—that we all may be one.

2. And through “Called to Common Mission” the Lutheran and Episcopal church established full communion between the two churches—and have recognized each other’s baptisms and ordinations, and so, here we are today.

## II. Common Mission in Camarillo

A. And in our own way, we here in Camarillo, have also worked to draw closer together in a sense of Common Mission as we have sought to answer the call to “Come and See.”

1. “Come and See,” Pastor John Soyster said to me, some 20 years ago, as he brought up the idea of reviving the joint Ash Wednesday service.

- And we’ve been joining together ever since.

2. “Come and See,” Pastor Miley and Father Al Smith said to one another years before, and the joint Ash Wednesday service was begun.

3. And from those early roots, we have been living out the call to “Come and See” ever since.

4. Not only have we been joining together on Ash Wednesdays for 20 years, but we have worked to live this out in other ways as well.

5. We’ve had a joint YOUTH GROUP—pooling our resources and young people to help them in their journey with God.

- We joined together as families in Advent to make Advent Wreathes for our homes and to learn about the special traditions of the season.

6. Our campus ministry work at CSUCI was another sign of our working together—and whatever became of that Chaplain who was spearheading all that work?

7. During this past year, we have worked together in this time of pandemic to bring our worship services to the people we love, even as we are encouraged to stay “safer at home.”

8. We have had book discussion groups, with participants from both churches—and we are talking now about how we might do our Lenten programs together.

9. And we have worked together—as our Baptismal Covenant reminds us—to respect the dignity of every human being, and to say that all of us are precious to the One who created us.

10. All these and more go to show us that GREAT things can be done when we come together to respond to the invitation to “Come and See.”

B. “Come and See,” Philip said to Nathaniel and the world was never the same again.

1. “Come and See,” the scholars said to one another as they met in dialogue and produced an agreement with lasting consequences that we celebrate 20 years later.

2. “Come and See,” say Lutherans and Episcopalians over and over again as we meet together and work together to respond to Jesus’ call to be his disciples in the world.

3. And now in a world torn apart by pain and distrust, by political discord, and a pandemic—we are once again called to “Come and See.

4. And now, that Campus Ministry Chaplain from long ago will share her thoughts, as Pastor Julie looks at how we can continue to respond to the call to “Come and See.”

*Pastor Julie Morris:*

## Come and See

Thank you, Fr. Greg. I am glad to be one of the living fruits of the full communion partnership between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. As an Episcopal Priest, I was able to receive Mount Cross' call 18 months ago to serve as Pastor only because it was made possible by the "Called to Common Mission" agreement we are celebrating today.

As we look at today's Gospel, we see that Philip was excited and eager to bring Nathanael to Jesus, "He said: we've found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth." But Nathanael resisted Philip, did you catch that in the reading? Nathanael's first impulse was to completely dismiss the possibility that Jesus could be the Messiah. He said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael apparently held a prejudice against Jesus' hometown and its people. We don't know why Nathanael was biased against Nazareth, but as we remember Martin Luther King Jr. this weekend, it's worth noticing that Nathanael almost missed out on meeting Jesus because his prejudices got in the way. Thank God for the Philips and Martins in our world who insist that we drop our prejudices so we don't miss what God intends for us. "Forget your bias against Nazareth," Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see!"

One of the gifts of Called to Common Mission is that it requires us to look past any biases we might have about each other to enter into the unity Jesus wants for us. It might be a small thing between Lutherans and Episcopalians, branches that are so close to each other on the Christian tree, but it is always good and faithful practice to set aside prejudice and see how we can meet Christ in each other.

Once Nathanael met Jesus, it didn't take long for him to recognize who Jesus really was: "You are the son of God, you are the king of Israel!" he said to Jesus.

And then, right after today's Gospel, as the new disciples follow Jesus, the very first thing they do with him is go to a wedding. You remember what Jesus does at the wedding, right?—he changes water into wine—a lot of wine, a lot of really good wine. In a place where the wine had run out, signaling the soon-to-be sad end of the party, Jesus saved the day. He changed the beverage of survival into the beverage of celebration. Water into wine.

“Come and see” is what the church at its best is able to say to the world: Come and see how life—your life, my life, and our life together in community—can be transformed by Jesus. From “same old, same old” water to “Wow”—wine! Something new, something adventurous, something full of hope and possibility and joy. Come and see how grace and forgiveness can heal you and free you to begin again no matter where you’ve been. Come and see how satisfying and life-giving it is to be part of a community that bears one another’s burdens, shares each other joys and works together to improve society for everybody. “Come and see.”

My hope for this deepening relationship between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church experienced locally by us at Mount Cross and St. Columba’s is that we can help each other move beyond concerns about **survival**—where we ask questions like, “How can we keep our churches afloat? Where do we find more volunteers? How do we pay the bills and keep our heads above water?”—to being *invitational*, asking questions like, “How can we invite more people into the life-giving relationship we have with God through Jesus? How can we better serve our youth, helping them to hear God’s voice, as Eli helped young Samuel in today’s first reading? How can we support each other in studying the Bible and forming lives of prayer and compassion? How can we work together to assess and respond to the needs of Camarillo and help heal our culture that in some places is so angry, crass and polarized and in other places is so sad, lonely and overwhelmed?”

My hope for the partnership between our two churches and, God willing, with even more of our full communion partners, is that we can shift to being less about surviving and more about inviting others into the Christian life and Christian community.

Of course, we don’t have to wait for anything else to be in place to send out the invitations. In response to today’s Gospel, I have a challenge for everyone listening: who can you invite this week to “Come and see” what is happening—even in this time of pandemic—at either of our churches? Think who you can invite to Sunday worship, or a Bible study, book group, youth program, a contemplative prayer experience, or a peace & justice meeting? Because everything is online for now, you don’t have to limit yourself to people in this area, and you *already* have the words of invitation, they are: “Come and see.” Come and see.

Now, come and sing. Our hymn of the day is one both churches share, “Christ is made the sure foundation.”