

February 6, 2022

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish
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weekly newsletter

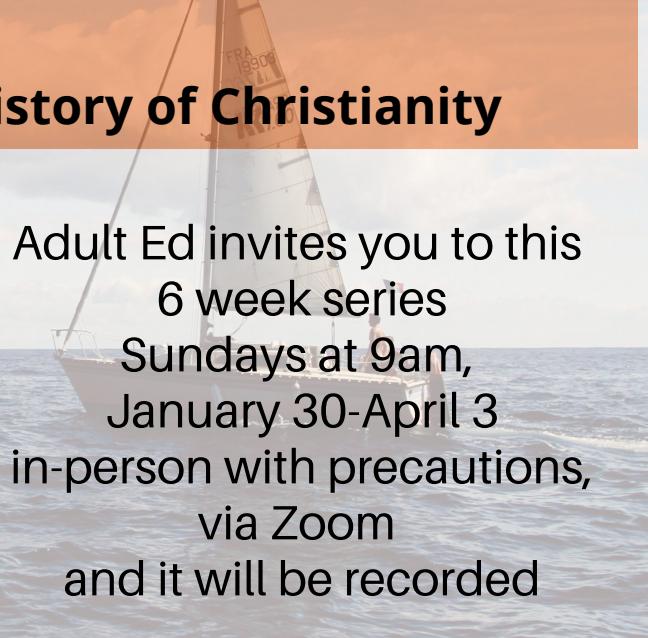
The Carpenter's Helper

This Week, #WeRemember

From a boatful, to billions An absurdly short history of Christianity

Who invented Church? How did we go from a few fishermen to billions of faithful people? And what relevance can the church have in a time when belief seems to have become a dirty word? In six sessions, we will follow the development of the Christian Movement from the time of the Apostles to the Electronic Age.

Along the way, there will be a few heretics and councils, but we will also talk about how our past shapes us and what we believe. Come along for new insights on familiar stories and maybe some new information too.



Adult Ed invites you to this 6 week series Sundays at 9am, January 30-April 3 in-person with precautions, via Zoom and it will be recorded

Begins February 8 ...

Six-week Course with Sue Linderman:

Racism in America:
the History We Didn't Learn in School



Tuesdays, February 8 – March 15
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

This six-week course will raise the knowledge and awareness of untold history in America. The course begins with enslaved Africans in the country that is now known as America in 1619 and goes through to voting rights and suppression in 2021.

Week six of the course challenges participants to explore actions to change systemic racial injustice and ensure a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and just society.

For more information about this course, other racial justice offerings, and to register, please visit: delaware.church/racial-justice

ALL are Welcome!

Sunday

8:00 am

Rite 1 spoken

Sunday

10:30 am

Rite 2 with music

Wednesday

12 noon

Intercessory Prayer

Thursday

7:00 pm

Evening Compline

Inspiration from Nelly Sachs

by Kenneth Hansen-Jones

You have likely never heard of Nelly Sachs. Although a celebrated poet and playwright, she does not have a large following in the contemporary United States. Yet, I find myself thinking of her quite often as we continue to live in what will someday be referred to as "the Covid Era." There are few in our society who have not been affected in some way, whether it be to our physical, mental, or financial health, or from losing someone we loved. We are all of us, in a sense, survivors, even if we never personally caught Covid.

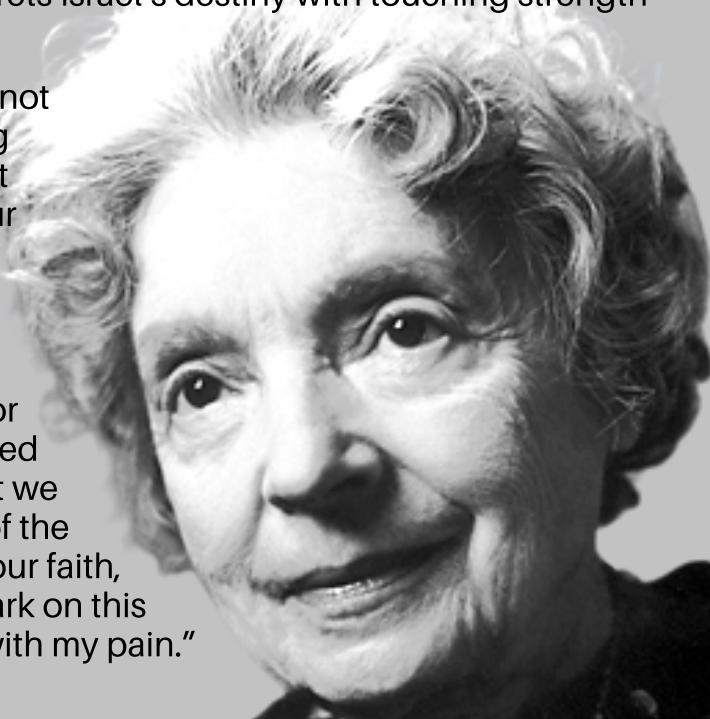
This is why I cannot seem to get Nelly Sachs out of my mind.

Sachs was born in 1891, in what was then the German Empire. Born into a wealthy Jewish family, she and her mother were on the very last flight out of Nazi Germany in 1940, escaping to neutral Sweden, where they would both spend the remainder of their lives. Their flight occurred a mere week before Sachs was supposed to report for deportation to a concentration camp. While she, blessedly, was never forced to see the inside of a concentration camp, she was no less a survivor of the Holocaust than those who experienced, firsthand, such horrors.

After the terrors of the Holocaust, Sachs, like so many other Jewish people around the world, found herself in shock, unable to process the sheer enormity of what had happened to her religious community. Sachs had always been an introvert with a history of physical health complaints, and she often found herself unable to process the enormity of the world's alteration. While at a conference in Switzerland, Sachs—who now considered herself entirely Swedish—suffered a nervous breakdown when she heard someone speaking German, and she was forced to spend time in a sanatorium.

That, thankfully, is not the end of Sachs' story. Already a well-known author before her escape from Germany, Sachs turned to her art to try and process her grief. Her post-1945 works focused on the question of "what now?" What, she asked through her writing, were the Jewish people to do? Her collections, including one with the desperately sad title of "O the Chimneys," sought to answer that question. While her poetry was no prescription or magic spell for her religious compatriots in a post-Holocaust world, Sachs' art was the coping mechanism she needed to not just survive, but to thrive: she would go on to win the 1966 Nobel Prize in Literature, "for her outstanding lyrical and dramatic writing, which interprets Israel's destiny with touching strength" (NobelPrize.org).

We are not yet in a post-Covid world. Sadly, we might not be for some time. We are all of us, in a sense, still being victimized by the vagaries of nature. In such a moment in our lives, how do we process our fear, our losses, our loneliness? How do we deal with that trauma? There is no one answer, and not all of us can do what Nelly Sachs did. Yet, I think of her often when I ask myself these questions, and I challenge myself to try and live up to the—admittedly stratospheric-example she set for us after her own losses. That, my friends, is why I wanted to take a moment to tell you about Nelly Sachs, so that we can, all of us, challenge ourselves to take the trauma of the past two years, and to invest it in our art, our families, our faith, or any other thing through which we can leave our mark on this world and say at the end, "This is the good that I did with my pain."



O the chimneys
on the carefully planned dwellings of death
When Israel's body rose dissolved in smoke
through the air –

To be welcomed by a chimney sweep star
Turned black
Or was it a ray of the sun?

O the chimneys!
Paths of freedom for the dust of Jeremiah and Job –
Who dreamed you up and built stone upon stone
The path of smoke for their flight?

O dwellings of death
Set out so enticingly
For the host of the house, who used to be the guest –

O you fingers
Laying the stone of the threshold
Like a knife between life and death –

O you chimneys

O you fingers

And Israel's body dissolves in smoke through the air!

- Nelly Sachs, 1947