**Collegeville Institute**

**Communities of Calling Initiative**

**Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative**

**Pre-Meeting Work Fall 2020**

**Vocational loss and grief, *and* Innovation and promise**

**Loss and Grief**

[This video](https://www.facebook.com/ingrid.c.rasmussen/videos/10222939128729650), created by Pastor Ingrid Rasmussen of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, is a powerful walking witness to the pain Holy Trinity’s neighborhood went through at the killing of George Floyd and during the uprising of grief and anger that followed. Her slow journey through the smoke and debris of the neighborhood marks the end of so many vocational dreams: thriving immigrant-owned businesses and restaurants, a non-profit acting “as a circle of support that nurtures native American youth.” National Guard and State Patrol troops stand guard as she makes her way, greeting congregants, neighbors, and strangers. One man, noticing her pregnancy, begs her to leave the smoky street for the sake of her child. “Don’t do it,” he says. And then he adds, “God bless you, though.” Ingrid introduces several of the businesses with, “Our beloved…”: “our beloved Gandhi Mahal, our beloved Endeavor Glass.” As part of their work on calling, the congregation had been in the midst of interviewing immigrant business owners about their sense of calling to their work, when they were interrupted by the pandemic. Now the fate of so many of these businesses is unknown.

**Tending the Flame**

On June 3, Ingrid wrote [the following account](https://www.facebook.com/jane.l.patterson.1/posts/10223504372742945):

*As I was finishing a conversation with a NY Times reporter yesterday, a man approached me carrying a lantern. He introduced himself as Brian Dragonfly, an employee from MIGIZI, an organization that is (was) located across the alley from the church. MIGIZI was founded in the 70s with a goal of countering misrepresentations and inaccuracies about Native people in the media. In addition to its communications work, it also focuses on Native youth empowerment. MIGIZI’s building survived the first night of unrest in the neighborhood. The second night, members of AIM (the American Indian Movement) were on site, monitoring activity around the building, but no amount of goodwill could stop the fire that spread from a neighboring building. MEGIZI’s building, completed late last year, and many of its contexts, were destroyed.*

*Brian Dragonfly said that when he came to assess the situation, he found that the building was still burning. “I decided to capture the fire,” he said, holding up his lantern. He wondered if Holy Trinity would tend the fire with MIGIZI until they could rebuild. He thought that the flame—the fire—might bring some comfort to his community.*

*In we went to the sanctuary. Brian set the lantern on the altar. I ran to find a candle. We shared the fire—and along with it the trauma of the preceding days, the conviction that not all that was destroyed is to be mourned, and the hope that this ashy moment in our neighborhood’s life will be an opportunity for new life. MIGIZI shared on Facebook: “Despite the flames, we as a community burn brighter…. We look forward to showing our resilience once again.”*

Congregants of Holy Trinity continue to share responsibility in caring for the flame, moving it from house to house.

**Innovation and Promise: “We belong to each other”**

In their project proposal for this year, the Holy Trinity congregational team described the conditions that shaped their proposal as: Covid-19 isolation/uncertainty; worldwide racial reckoning following George Floyd’s death; and rebuilding efforts in Minneapolis following the uprising. In response to these conditions, Holy Trinity’s first vocational project for this year is to serve as the host for a series of virtual and socially distanced neighborhood meetings to gather all the stakeholders around the vocational question of what kind of neighborhood they want to work toward becoming. They have sought local BIPOC and immigrant participation in the dreaming and planning, as they seek to become a place where all can flourish together. Holy Trinity’s central role as a trustworthy neighbor was tried and proven over the course of the summer as they answered the call of the moment to become a community hub for a wide range of immediate needs, including food, first aid, and the need for a place of rest and safety in the midst of the turmoil. That work extended for more than three months. Their decades-long faithfulness to their core calling to be a neighbor gave them the flexibility and clarity to sense the urgency of the immediate needs as well as trust that God will be with them as they work to rebuild together in ways that no one has yet imagined. They are following the unfolding of the guiding commitment for their work this year: “We belong to each other” (Romans 12:5).

[This article](https://www.christiancentury.org/article/interview/being-church-while-neighborhood-burns?fbclid=IwAR1e9enoFZgujZBPVY3ki9iQ2BBp2rRN9fWvEOZNwTH3Ikg-E90TXHyxypw) from the Christian Century tells more of their story.