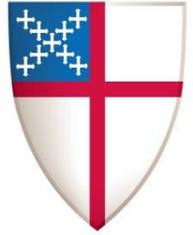


St. John's Episcopal Church and Day School

Alamogordo, New Mexico

Our Mission is to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel
and to seek and serve Christ in all people



2023 – March Newsletter

Greetings during this time of repentance and transformation!

Every time we arrive at Lent, I am reminded of how practical a time it was in European culture for such a long time. Lent would come in the time between the first sowing and the first harvest, when people's supplies were already running low. Lent was a time to remember community, and those who for various reasons had endured a more difficult harvest than others. It was a time to share and to prepare.

Fasting in our tradition is often talked about in terms of emptying oneself. This is the same kind of emptying that the author of Hebrews uses to describe the ministry of Jesus when he empties himself of divinity in order to engage us as human beings; and the author draws several important parallels between this emptying and the need we all have to be humble as Jesus was.

Another big part of this season is the cycle of repentance and penitance which many of us have come to associate with some of the more extreme or even self-abasing lenten fasts. And this conflation of fasts with self-flagellation has not done our understanding of repentance any favors. As I said on Ash Wednesday, repentance comes from the Greek word that means simply to change your mind or to have a conversion experience.

It takes both humility and repentance to journey through Lent. It is easier for us to see where we've gone astray when we keep in mind not to take ourselves too seriously, something Jesus makes sure to teach us at every opportunity.

May this Lent bring you growth and life. Blessings from...

Your Brother in Christ,

The Rev. Michael Peter Drinkwater

How to Pray

An article for the newsletter by Nancy Gregory, Senior Warden

I remember when I first began to wonder, was I praying the right way? For a long while I just prayed however my parents were teaching me to pray in church and bedtime prayers. But after a while, I began to ask myself, would God hear my prayers? Were my prayers making a difference? Was I doing it right? There must be a right way I thought. I really wanted God to hear me. That seemed important.

So I started asking people how they prayed. What kind of praying was best for them? I started to read books about prayer, go to workshops on praying, talk to clergy about types of prayer, and do some “experimenting” on my own.

The Episcopal Church teaches some traditional types of prayer, including the principal ones of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition. We do a lot of those types during our worship together on Sundays and throughout the week.

You’ve probably heard it said, singing once, is praying twice. Singing is said to multiply the effect of our prayers. Thank goodness for choir practice!

Then there’s Celtic Spirituality, an ancient tradition, that seems to make the barriers between us and God thinner. Here’s one of my favorite stanzas from an ancient Celtic blessing:

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,

May the clarity of light be yours,

May the fluency of the ocean be yours,

May the protection of the ancestors be yours.

The words of this poem emphasize an appreciation for nature and then that awareness enters into the blessing. God’s gift of the natural world to us, is to enjoy, and to be grateful.

There’s another type of prayer called Centering Prayer or Contemplative Prayer. You may have heard of it or tried it. It is a prayer of no words. And also no thoughts, at least as best you can manage. A period of time passes in silence, resting in the presence of the Holy Spirit and God, with deep breathing, relaxation, and it is usually done every day. Admittedly it is hard to settle your mind into a state of not thinking and the people who teach this type of prayer talk about that, how to react. Probably the most well know teachers were Thomas Keating and Thomas Merton.

So, you may be asking, why is that prayer fruitful? How could that be? I don’t really know, except that it helps me feel closer to God and the Holy Spirit.

May you find your prayers, keep on praying, and find the type of prayer that brings you closer to God.

Why Do I Care about Richard Hooker and Thomas Merton?

The Rev. Aileen Walther

Fr. Michael has asked me (Deacon Aileen) to write an article about Richard Hooker and Thomas Merton. The answer is, although I admit to having odd tastes, I have been curious about why people are the way they are and what has influenced different individuals to have the values or lack of values they have. I was born in England from the union of an English mother and a Canadian/American father who introduced me to different cultures and how important it was to respect others different from myself. One day I met an Episcopal priest who taught church history. He came to our church and I eventually took a class from him on Richard Hooker from the 16th century. Hooker wrote a book called *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*? It was important because it would determine what kind of church the Church of England would be. We (Christians) have to decide what kind of Christians we will be and with whom we will interact. It is different today because Christianity in most places is not a state religion. But who we are as Christians is critical.

This issue, although not about state religion for Thomas Merton, would be important as well. Merton would have to decide whether he would be a Christian and what kind. Ultimately, he chose to be a Roman Catholic, a monk, and a key spiritual master. He still teaches faith and even the value of interfaith ministry today. Sometimes Christians are afraid of interacting with other faiths, but we learn from Merton that we need not fear. There is no human being from whom we cannot learn. Merton learned from his struggles, and the faith of those very different from himself.

Today's world is full of people who struggle with faith and who hold many different views about faith. It is what Hooker and Merton have in common. As you encounter people similar to you as well as those who are different, remember God made each one. You may find that Hooker and Merton have something in common as well as many differences. I invite you to learn from each one and to explore what God had in mind to teach you and me about all the human beings God made.

Schedule of Sunday Readings

| Date | Old Testament | Psalms | Epistle | Gospel |
|--------|------------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|
| 5-Mar | Genesis 12:1-4a | Psalms 121 | Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 | John 3:1-17 |
| 12-Mar | Exodus 17:1-7 | Psalms 95 | Romans 5:1-11 | John 4:5-42 |
| 19-Mar | 1 Samuel 16:1-13 | Psalms 23 | Ephesians 5:8-14 | John 9:1-41 |
| 26-Mar | Ezekiel 37:1-14 | Psalms 32 | Psalms 130 | John 11:1-45 |

Rota

| Date | Sunday | Reader - 8:00 | Prayers - 800 | EM - 1015 |
|--------|--------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| 5-Mar | Lent 2 | John | Nancy | Sharon |
| 12-Mar | Lent 3 | Randy | Joyce | Steve |
| 19-Mar | Lent 4 | Geoff | Nancy | Sharon |
| 26-Mar | Lent 5 | Joyce | Joyce | Nancy |

| Community Kitchen Schedule | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 7-Mar | St. Joseph's |
| 14-Mar | PPW |
| 21-Mar | Christ Community |
| 28-Mar | Retired Teachers |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important March Meetings

Our March Vestry meeting is still to be determined. An email will be sent several days ahead of time with the link for those who are interested in attending.

New Formation Opportunity

Some of you may know that we have been working to update the Chancel screen booklet. This new work provides a great opportunity for us to engage in theological reflection together using a variety of media while also exploring a fascinating part of our history at St. John's.

We will be joining together in the Sanctuary on Wednesdays at 11 during Lent to look at the images and do theological reflection together.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

March Birthdays:

Louise (3/8), Marijean (3/12), Hannah (3/24) and Bruce Freeman (3/25)

Happy BIRTHday to all!

Blessing Bag Ministry

Blessing Bags contain **travel** size items (i.e. hand sanitizer, small note books, toothbrush, toothpaste, pens, pencils, shampoo, deodorant, granola bars, soap, tuna/cracker packs, underwear, socks etc). We place several of the items in a gallon storage bag and distribute them to those in need. Currently, we are working closely with COPE and local partners in addition to Rio Grande Borderland Ministries.

If you are interested in helping in this ministry, please contact Sharon Kelman at 757 718 9451 or email ke4zia@gmail.com. You may bring any items you purchase to the church and deposit them in the bag that is located in the Narthex any Sunday.

We will have a special time of stuffing bags together during coffee hour on March 5.

Saturday Morning Bible Study

We currently have a Bible Study that meets each Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. for a Bible seminar in the Parish Hall. All men and women from the community with an interest in the study of scripture are invited to attend. This will be restarting the Saturday following labor day.

Caring card ministry

I would like to thank everyone who has donated cards, stamps and stickers to this ministry. We would like to help you celebrate **ALL** occasions. So, if you haven't signed up on our birthday (we just need month and day-**NO YEARS**) and anniversary lists, please do so. If you know of someone who may enjoy receiving one of our cards, please let me know. The sign-up sheets are on the table in the Narthex. If you prefer, you may contact me directly: Sharon Kelman email: ke4zia@gmail.com or 757-718 9451 call or text.

Pet Prayer Chain

Many people in our congregation have pets. We all love our pets. They are part of our family. When they are sick, elderly or lost, it is a comfort to know that our church family is praying for them as well as us. If you have or know of a pet that could benefit from our ministry, please let David-Luke or Nancy know.

Daily Office

Morning Prayer is offered Monday through Friday at 8:00 a.m. Evening Prayer is offered Monday through Friday at 4:00 p.m.

Links to these services can be found on the website.

Formation Hour

Join us on Sundays at 9 for our Bible Study. Been to a lot of bible studies? None? All are welcome.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you knit or crochet? Are you interested in doing it as part of an ongoing spiritual practice that gives back to the community? If you are and would like more information, like patterns or prayers, please contact Joyce at joycesummers@mac.com

St. John's Episcopal Church

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Sunday Services: 8:00am Rite I; 10:15am Rite II

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