

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
201 EAST CHURCH STREET
MARSHALLTOWN, IA 50158



MARCH EPISTLE 2023

A Publication of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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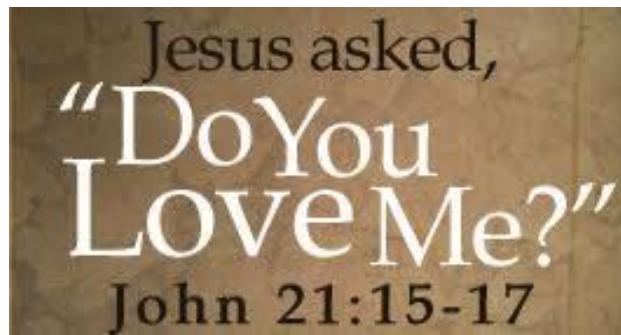
I lift up my eyes to the hills; * from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, * the maker of heaven and earth.
– Psalm 121:1-2

Mr. Rogers often shared the advice in times of disaster to “look for the helpers.” In seeing God at work in those around us in the midst of suffering, we are further empowered to find that same strength, inspiration, hope, and love in our own hearts.

When I lived in South Sudan, I met so many remarkable helpers. One helper inspired me particularly. She was deeply moved by the plight of the girls who lived on the street and were often abused, and she opened her home to support the children by teaching them the skills (like basic hygiene) they needed before they could be enrolled in school. She loved the children and helped them find safety, health, and education. It was not an easy road. For many of the girls, she was the only adult in their lives who truly loved and protected them, and that also meant she was the only one they could get angry with in safety. I filled in for her for just one day when she had to go out of town, and I was so utterly unprepared to handle the situation; I had to give myself a time-out. I laughed with her and some of the girls about it later.

I learned that we are called to act in love even when we are utterly unprepared for the tasks at hand. She showed me that in the face of massive, seemingly intractable situations of suffering, there is always something that can be done. From where is our help to come? God helps us as we seek to be the helpers. Who are the helpers who have inspired you? When have you been a helper to someone else? When has God helped you with the hope or strength you needed in a difficult time?

(This Lenten Season, Episcopal Relief & Development invites you to join us as we meditate on the commandment to love our neighbor and consider the meaning of this fundamental instruction in our daily lives. The Rev. Robin Denney, a parish priest and former missionary focused on agricultural development in Liberia and South Sudan, wrote this year’s meditations. Robin’s reflections are poignant and personal and challenge the reader to consider the question, “Who is my neighbor?”)



Do You Love Jesus?

How often have you, in your lived experience in the Episcopal Church, heard the following from one of your clergy preaching God's word with teary eyes and a voice cracking with emotion?

"Do you love Jesus? Tell me, brothers and sisters, do you love Jesus?" Do you love him with your whole heart? Do you love him dearly?"

I would submit that preached speech like this, while it may go over in other Christian traditions, is not typical in the Episcopal Church.

It sounds, well, not like us.

Such speech seems too raw, packed with too much emotion. It trips up believers like so many of us whose tendency is to take a more rational and intellectual approach to the faith.

Just so you know, I'm not anti-intellectual when it comes to faith. For one, I believe in fossils and the science behind carbon dating of same, which clearly places me at odds with Biblical Fundamentalists who think that creation took place roughly five thousand years ago and unfolded over 6 days. I believe faith and science are complimentary, not incompatible.

I'm not anti-intellectual. To see me, to hear me, you would think I was your prototypical Episcopalian, more rational than emotional in matters of faith. And this description of me would be spot one, but for one thing.

Though baptized in an Episcopal Church as an infant in the city of Boston, I spent most of my childhood going to a huge American Baptist Church in Long Beach, California. My Episcopal journey, which began early, didn't really resume until my mid-adolescence.

As a Baptist, I learned about Jesus through the filter of that evangelical tradition. Faithfully I went to Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, and I attended summer camp. Like a good steak carefully seasoned for a hot grill, I marinated in

the overwhelming belief that Jesus, God's only son and my personal savior, really and dearly loved me.

Just as I am, as the old hymn proclaims, *Just as I am*; in my sin, warts, and all. Jesus really and personally and dearly loved me.

And though I have painfully strayed, both personally and professional, from living up to the intimate love Jesus has for me and would have me share with others as a Christian and a priest, I pray each day for Jesus to take over my heart, lay it bare, so that I can love him as dearly as he loves me.

I pray that my hyper-rational self, which guards the door to my heart, lays down its defenses, so that Jesus' passionate, unconditional love for me might flow, like blood, in and through me.

As we move forward together in our Lenten journey and partnership in ministry, please know this. Whatever energy I have in my work with you at St. Paul's is not the byproduct of any sophistication or rationality I might claim or others might ascribe to me; it doesn't come from my degrees, my varied leadership roles, or my skill sets; it comes, rather, from my awareness, however inconsistent, of the flowing, deeply personal, and unconditional love that Jesus has for me, and not just for me, but for everyone, for all of you, for the whole world.

This is what keeps my spirit alive; it's what I stand for, sometimes even fight for; I believe God's love for us and our loving response to it is Christianity 101, absolutely fundamental.

It's the core of the Gospel, the truth clergy need to preach *ad nauseam*, Sunday after Sunday.

And, it's what I believe keeps the Spirit alive in the church, in this church and in churches everywhere, so that all of us collectively, regardless of what flavor of Christianity we espouse, can truly walk in love and be forces for grace and goodness that God can use to heal the world.

Do you love Jesus? I hope so!

Blessings,

Richard



It has been a busy month, with weather-related and building repair issues popping up unexpectedly.

A roof leak has developed in the office area - we have a quote from Procrafters roofing to fix it, but it will have to wait until the weather permits, due to cold temps and possible snow. Also, a blower motor on one of our furnaces failed and had to be replaced. Even though we keep the building at a minimum temperature most of the time we do need to keep the pipes from freezing. Speaking of pipes, we had another mystery water leak - Hartwig plumbing has been here to try to determine its source and I think we now have it under control.

On January 13th I met with engineers from Neumann Brothers Construction from Des Moines to review the work necessary to fix the church building. They spent the better part of an hour reviewing the areas in need and are in the process of getting a bid together for us. It should be on my desk soon.

A large contingent from the Caring Center visited us a couple of weeks ago to inspect the Great Hall to see if it would fit their needs - they were unanimously enthusiastic about the possibility of moving their operation here. The space available to them would be far greater than any other space they have occupied in the past. They will determine how much they will be able to pay for rent, and at our next vestry meeting we will determine what we need to charge them. We don't want to make money from their operation, but we do need to cover our costs, so hopefully we can come to a mutual agreement.

All the 2022 end-of-year submissions, forms and assorted paperwork has been completed. Tax forms, parochial reports, and parish annual reports are all finished.

Please make a note of the Annual Meeting date - March 19th. The meeting will be held after the regular Sunday service, so please make a special point of being there as we have many things to review and discuss.

Our Blessing Box has proven to be a great success, with many people taking advantage of the food, clothing, and other items that we stock in it every day.

Thanks to all of you who donate to this worthy cause. For any of you who are interested, the Marshalltown Extension Service will be holding a meeting to discuss food access in Marshall County. This session will include a brief presentation on food access and resilience, introduction of food pantries and support agencies, and discussion of potential collective projects for the Marshall County community. The session will be held at the Marshalltown Public Library on Friday, March 10th, from 1:00pm until 3:00pm

Mike Bayne
Parish Administrator



ANNUAL MEETING: On Sunday, March 19, we will hold our Annual Meeting following our 10:15 a.m. service. At that time, we will thank Joyce Bayne for her service on the Vestry and Chris DeMeyer will be nominated to fill our Vestry vacancy. We will also elect a Convention Delegate and Alternate and hear other reports from the year past. Copies of the 2022 Annual Report will be emailed to our membership and hard copies will also be available on Sunday morning the week prior to the Annual Meeting.

ARTS@STPAULS: We are happy to announce a preliminary line-up of events for 2023. There will be an Easter concert featuring Artist-in-Residence, Hudson Lourenço-Held and other artists on April 18, a concert performed by Cathedral Organist Mark Babcock in July, a Spooktacular Concert or a Hymn Sing Concert in Mid-October, and a Christmas concert in December. Additionally, we have a tentative May performance commitment from the Central Iowa Classical Guitar Society. As details of these events are finalized, we will notify our congregation and the wider community.



Let us pray for those who have asked for our prayers: Orlin Klinkefus, Ruth Davis, Dan and Carroll McInroy, Bob & Nancy Petersen, Alice, Brian DeSilva, Marleen Otto.

We pray for all who have died, especially Colleen Harmon, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.

We pray for all those during the month of March who are celebrating birthdays, especially Chris DeMeyer, Jonathan Wait, Joeann Finch, and Scott Lindborg, and for those observing anniversaries, especially Michael and Joyce Bayne.

We pray for the clergy and people of every parish in our diocese. We also pray for our companion dioceses of Nzara and Swaziland in Africa, and Brechin in Eastern Scotland.

We pray for leaders in every community and nation we entrust with the authority of government, especially for Joseph, our President and Kimberly, our Governor, that they may be filled with the love of truth and righteousness and seek the common good.

We pray for the people of Ukraine, for all those suffering or afraid, that they will soon know justice and peace in their land.

We pray for all those whose lives have been appallingly ended by the heartless use of firearms.

We pray for an end to the coronavirus pandemic and pray for all those working world-wide to care for those who have contracted the virus.

On the Lighter Side

