

February 2018

*At St. Stephen's,
our Mission is to
worship, love and
serve Our Lord
Jesus Christ,
welcoming
everyone,
deepening our
faith, helping our
neighbors and
caring for creation*

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New Beginnings...

Words of Hope and Note

Priest's Passages

Dear Ones,

Traveling always brings new perspectives, and I am deeply grateful for the traveling I've just done, the group who surrounded me as I did, and the lessons I learned...I always learn from travel.

I went to the Holy Lands with two intentions. First, I hoped to know and experience our Lord more clearly, by standing on the land on which he stood, by touching the water he touched, by breathing the air he breathed, by gazing on the land in which he lived. Second, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the current political situations that trouble this Holy Land. My intentions were met, and, I hope, my learning will continue. A pilgrimage is meant to bring about a change.

Early in the morning of our second day, we gathered at a spot on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (or Lake Gennesaret) to celebrate the Eucharist. The altar around which we gathered was a very large bolder, flattened on the top, and with a small metal cross attached. We, the congregation, gazed out, over the altar, and at the water across a bit of a shore marshland, where the sun backlit the tall grasses and seed pods. Birds chattered, fish jumped in the distance, the sunlight glittered on the water, and fishermen went about their work in boats, just as they did 2000 years ago. Life was happening there in our presence, just as it was in the time of Jesus, and as we celebrated the Lord's Supper, I was struck with the God's presence in the beauty of creation, the same beauty that has existed for centuries. Life around us, no matter whether we are on the Sea of Galilee, or at West Beach, or in the Cascade Mountains, or at any holy land, God calls to us to hear, to listen, to cherish the richness of creation and to know God's presence in word and sacrament. In the breaking of the bread, there on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, I knew the Lord's presence.

My second intention was not as easy, for the current situation between the Israeli and Palestinian people is so very complex. My knowledge of it was minimal when I left, and I know a bit more now, but the real understanding of it is in the living of it. We met many wonderful people, all of whom have clear opinions on the matter. To choose which side is right or wrong is not the point, but it is a temptation.

A large cement wall divides much of the land called Israel from the land called Palestinian Territories. That wall divides the small city of Bethlehem, which is just 9 miles from Jerusalem. On our second day in Bethlehem, our tour guide, Ghassan, a Palestinian Christian, took us to see the wall up close. It is about 30 feet high there and of solid cement. Because the Palestinian people are restricted in so many ways (they cannot even go into Jerusalem without getting a permit, the process of which takes weeks) one of the only ways they



Priest's Passages (Continued)

can protest is with graffiti. I posted (on Facebook) a photo of Deacon Dennis standing in front of that wall, so you can see a bit of the “art” that covers it and conveys the deep feelings of the Palestinian people. Ghassan told us to walk a bit of the wall and to take a look at the art and know better the sense of the people who are, in essence, held captives in their own land (and whose own land is heavily interrupted by Israeli settlements). Many of our group set out to walk as far as they could up the street and along the wall. Some of us lingered near the bus and watched the action around the wall. A large guard tower sat atop the wall and, at times, a military rifle was stuck out and aimed at someone or something. Someone observed that there were children who were throwing rocks at the wall, and I held my breath when the business end of that rifle appeared in the window. Thankfully, nothing happened. We went on with our tour, some walking, some taking photos, some darting into shops (a spray-paint shop was popular). Suddenly, a large popping sound alerted us to the fact that something was happening. The military rifle previously aimed at rock-throwing children was now put away, and the Israeli soldiers had come down to the street level, and through openings in the wall, were now shooting canisters of tear gas out on the street. Those of us near the bus climbed quickly back onto the bus, but there were about 5 of our group who were not yet back. Karim, our bus driver (and what an excellent one he is) began backing the bus down the street to get us away from the awful gas, and Ghassan borrowed someone’s car to drive up the street and find our 5 missing pilgrims. We all held our breath a bit. While the tear-gas canisters continued to be lobbed out of several of the wall’s openings, our bus retreated a ways while we waited for the return of our whole group. When Ghassan and the missing pilgrims returned, several of them had sustained the nasty effects of tear-gas – irritated eyes and sinuses. But, it had affected all of us in other ways. This was a very scary incident. What was a stop meant for observing, turned into a hostile environment in the streets of the city in which our Savior was born. As we drove away, Bishop Rickel and Ghassan each spoke to us over the bus’s PA system. This had never happened to either of them in the many groups they had taken to the wall. They both felt that the tear gas was meant to discourage us, pilgrim/tourists, from observing the wall, from taking photos, and, I suppose, from telling others of the situation. Tear gas was not used to dissuade the small neighborhood boys from throwing rocks. The cloying gas was meant for us, as observers and its message was “stay away!” Bishop Rickel apologized for putting us in a place where such a thing was possible, but he said he will take his next pilgrimage group back to that same spot. Bullying does not work.

As a Palestinian Christian, Ghassan has lived in Jerusalem most all his life, and is a wise and deeply faithful man. He has more access to passage than most Palestinians. That is, he can come and go between Palestinian Territory and Israel much more easily than most other Palestinians because of his work, and the fact that he is a well-known tour guide, and thus a provider of tourism, one of Israel’s main industries. He has the type of identification that makes it possible for

Priest's Passages (Continued)

him to come and go as he pleases for the most part. He spoke to us passionately about his belief that a two-state solution is a good idea...but that it probably will not happen. He believes that all people, Palestinians, Israelis, and people of all faiths (or no faiths) ought to live in freedom and harmony with and among each other. As a Palestinian man, he has much to hope for, and so do we. He is not the only one who asked for our continued prayers for peace in Israel and Palestine.

This Holy Land, our ancestral home, is a holy place, but, as I return home, I know that so too is Whidbey Island, the Cascade Mountains, the beaches of the Pacific Ocean, and the streets of Seattle. Seeing the sites attributed to the life of Jesus of Nazareth makes Israel and Palestine holy, but seeing what the followers of Jesus do on Whidbey or Seattle or in the mountains, makes this place holy too. Holy land is so by the actions of the people who walk the land and treat one another with dignity and respect. May our land here be holy and continue to reflect God's presence more than the issues that divide us.

Faithfully,
Rilla+



Birthdays & Anniversaries

Feb. 2: Maggie G.
Feb. 3: Kathy F.
Feb. 3: Jennifer P.
Feb. 6: Liz Howes
Feb. 8: Vernon G.
Feb. 8: Bob T.
Feb. 11: Amy G.
Feb. 14: Jim W.
Feb. 15: Christine V.
Feb. 16: Rick C.
Feb. 20: Dennis T.
Feb. 20: Dick S.
Feb. 21: Michele I.-G.
Feb. 25: Lee P.
Feb. 28: Michael B.

**No Anniversaries this month



Deacon's Corner

Flu Again.

Just back from the Holy Land and still trying to absorb all that I saw and heard. It is an amazing experience made all the more so by the conflicts in the region. Another part of flying and being together with 37 people, in close quarters, is the experience of sharing illness. Most of us came home bearing viruses, including yours truly, Mary Ann and Rilla.

We worked at and did all the recommended precautions. We had the recommended flu shot, the five-strain version, washed our hands frequently, wiped down the tray-table, seat back and arm rests and kept hydrated. This last one is interesting when one spends 16 hours in an airplane at 40,000 feet. Dodging the bullet was not to be.

The primary strain this year is a variant of the (A)H3N2 although there is (A)H1N1 and type B activity going on. The vaccine became less effective as the (A)H3N2 modified as the vaccine was being processed. According the Health Canada it is only 20% effective this year. It is still important to get the flu shot, and not too late, as it may decrease the reaction to the primary virus and covers others.

Statistically, those over 49 are more susceptible to (A)H3N2. The top two groups being hospitalized are the usual number one, over 65 but second place is the 49-64 year olds, this is usually children not adults. Pediatric deaths are increasing with 53 reported as of the end of January. This season is being compared to 2009-2010 pandemic and or the 2014-2015 season. It has not yet peaked.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms that usually start suddenly, not gradually: Fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (very tired), some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in young children than in adults. Influenza is a virus and antibiotics are ineffective against it. There are anti-viral medications that can help but they need to be started within 48 hours of symptom onset and the sooner the better. Others who may want to start an antiviral regimen are care givers who are being exposed.

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. If you are showing symptoms, stay home. Everyone should wash their hands frequently with lots of plain soap and water. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Looking around the Church, many dioceses are limiting or banning intinction of the bread in the wine. There is no evidence of spreading of germs by the common cup, but there is evidence of fingers passing on germs when dipped in the wine.

**Deacon's
Corner** 

Deacon's Corner (Continued)

It is sufficient to receive communion in "one kind" either the bread or the wine. If you are feeling ill, I would receive the bread only and cross your arms over your chest to forego the wine.

Take care and stay healthy, the flu season should peak soon.
Let us talk.

Dennis



Personal Reflections (by Liz Klenke)

An inspirational poem, words that came to Liz after reflecting upon her two young children.

One Day

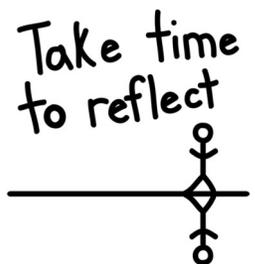
*One day you're not going to think I'm a rockstar
For being able to wrap your baby doll in a blanket
One day it's going to take a lot more to impress you
One day you might not be impressed at all*

*One day you'll realize I make a lot of mistakes
You'll stop asking me "why"
Because you'll realize I don't have all the answers
One day you won't believe every word I say*

*One day when you wake up you won't run into my arms
For a good morning hug
One day you'll tell me to go away
One day we won't be in the same house when you wake up*

*One day you won't be my little girl
With the big brown eyes
And legs you can't control
You won't want to tell me every second of your day
One day*

*Until then every morning I'll wake up
And hope today is not that day*





Hey, Bill: Tell Us Something Cool!

On at least one occasion, I have written about calendar keeping and time. Now, in early February, it seems an occasion to say more about this, but from a different angle.

I've recently awakened to a piece of calendar business that awaits us. As observant Christians, we know that Ash Wednesday will arrive in the middle of next week and that Easter will follow forty days [not counting Sundays] later. These days and the days that fall in between and after, have very much to do with our faith and practice. They mark out perhaps the most intense time, both spiritually and emotionally, of any observances in our calendar keeping, Christmas notwithstanding.

This being so, it is of particular interest to note that in 2018, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day, and our Easter will be observed on April 1st, April Fool's Day. So, the question might well arise, what are we to make of that?!

How does the coincidence of Christian observances and secular observances serve the interests of the faithful...or not?

In Paul's Letter to the Romans, we read as follows:

Do not be conformed to this world
But be transformed by the renewing of your minds,
So that you may discern what is the will of God—
What is good and acceptable and perfect.

[Romans 12.2]

It may well have been about our time and this particular dilemma that Paul was writing, even if he didn't know it. How best to take Valentine's Day and April Fool's Day, and to seek in them "what is good and acceptable and perfect"?

Regarding the first coincidence, the question is, can one begin the day with ashes and end the day with moonlight and roses? Oh, Mercy, I hope so! There seems to have been at least one or perhaps more Saints Valentine, the traces are unclear as to sorting out who is who. The guesses as to history can be readily found on the Internet and need not detain us here. What seems to be durable goods here is the association of Valentine with romantic love. The substance of this association depends on which of the stories seems most plausible to the reader.

The Ash Wednesday liturgy is marked by the imposition of ashes accompanied by these words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." [BCP 265] This is intended to begin our Lenten fast. The reading from Matthew that accompanies this part of the service has Jesus telling us, "...but when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret..." [Matthew 6.17-18] Although others seem to be of another mind, I have always taken this to mean that after the liturgy is over, I should wash my face, leaving the ashes behind. Then I should go, shiny faced, about my ordinary life, committed, in my own fragile way, to the discipline of Lent.

Hey, Bill: Tell Us Something Cool! (continued)

All day it would be Ash Wednesday but it will also be Valentine's Day, and somewhere through the day my disciplined life and attention would turn to my Life's Companion, a gift of God. At the very least, I will try to convey to her the love that I try to convey to her every day. Prayerfully, fastingly and in self-denial, I will reiterate and demonstrate my devotion to her. Surely, that will satisfy the expectations of the Valentinians!

Easter on April Fool's Day? Easy peasy! Hum to yourself, "The Lord of the Dance." The tune we know, called "Simple Gifts," is in the Hymnal at 554. "'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free..." The words to the Lord of the Dance do not appear in our hymnal but the words and tune are familiar enough. The words were written by the Irish poet and writer, Ronan Hardiman.

Through the considerable number of verses, "Jesus" sings his life using the metaphor of the dance. The chorus goes,

Dance, then, wherever you may be,
And I am the Lord of the dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

Now, as to the Day of Resurrection and April 1st. As the song moves to its conclusion, the narrator, hero, fool, Jesus, says,

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black.
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;
But I am the dance, and it still goes on.

[chorus]

They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me:
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.

It's such an easy thing to see the jester's cap and motley on the Risen One!

I hope that the interpretations offered here do not urge being "conformed to this world," but rather suggest that God has transforming access to us in a variety of ways, including those that are Valentinian and foolish.

Benedicite!

An Inspiration for our Rector Search by the Rev. Amy Donohue

Sunday January, 21, 2018, at St. Stephen's, I preached on Jesus' call of Simon and Andrew, and James and John from Mark's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 14-20. I am sharing excerpts from this sermon that we all might take to heart!

In today's Gospel, Mark is telling us again the story of how Jesus breaks into the everyday lives of Simon and Andrew, James and John. They were casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen. Day after day the same thing: the same sea, the same net, and the same boat. This morning, Jesus saw them on the dock and said, "Come follow me!"

And, my friends, this is precisely when Jesus breaks into the ordinary circumstances of our life! Jesus breaks into the contest of our everydayness with the possibility and the offer of new life. Jesus comes into the places of our hearts where we can change and Jesus awaits our everyday unique brand of ordinary to begin to stretch us toward something new!

With thanks to Tom Johnson, I offer a wonderful inspiration from John O'Donohue, an Irish poet and priest, an inspiration to accompany us all in our new adventures:

For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

An Inspiration for our Rector Search by the Rev. Amy Donohue (cont.)

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*

We, here at St. Stephen's, are in the times and places ripe for Jesus to show up and to call each of us into a new way of being. Today we find ourselves within a threshold experience, where our world will change. It happened to Simon and Andrew, James and John. It can happen for you and for me. It can happen for us at St. Stephen's, if we but hear the voice and step out onto the new ground of the One who beckons to us:

"Come follow me!"



*The Adult Formation Classes are held Sundays
beginning at 9:30 am in Miller Hall. Below is an
updated schedule of sessions.*



- February 18: Reading and Using the BCP—Rev. Bill and Rev. Rilla
- February 25: Reading and Using the BCP—Rev. Bill and Rev. Rilla
- March 4: Reading and Using the BCP—Rev. Bill and Rev. Rilla
- March 11: Reading and Using the BCP—Rev. Bill and Rev. Rilla
- March 18: The spirituality of Abraham Lincoln—Mike Moore
- March 25: No Adult Formation class—Palm Sunday
- April 1: No Adult Formation class—Easter

Remembering the Past, Treasuring the Present, Focusing on the Future

By Harry Anderson

It's only been a few weeks since our beloved rector, Rev. Rilla Barrett, told us that she will leave us at the end of this year. More than a few of us are still absorbing that news; we know how much Rilla's kind, gentle leadership has meant to St. Stephen's over the past five years.

We are now in what our Diocese calls a "transition." We have already begun the work necessary to call a new rector at St. Stephen's. We will follow an orderly process laid out for us last month by the Canon to the Ordinary, the Rev. Dr. Marda Steedman Sanborn. First, we'll spend time compiling and writing a detailed profile of ourselves and our church. Then, we'll seek, review and interview candidates interested in being our rector. This process will take time, but we have already begun work on the profile.

During this transition time, I think it's important to keep our attention on three things: remembering where we've been, treasuring our remaining time with Rilla and focusing on where we want to go.

Our parish came through a serious, emotional split followed by a decade of turmoil that strained and ended old friendships; we survived but the healing still continues. As we look to the future, I think we must remember the biggest lesson we learned during that painful time. It's written on our door mats, on our sign and in every Sunday bulletin: At St. Stephen's, all are welcome! We are a friendly, generous parish and it shows.

We are fortunate that Rilla has promised to stay with us at least through November, so we will have lots of chances to hear her preach and ask what our kids learned in Sunday School, chat with her at coffee hour, meet with her one-on-one and just enjoy her presence among us. Let's treasure this time and celebrate Rilla!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, let's keep our focus on the future. We have a wonderful opportunity ahead of us to help St. Stephen's grow and serve in the years ahead. How do we tell our community more about us and attract new members? What other things should be doing? What new programs do we want to have? What more might we offer to fulfill what we tell people is our mission: "To love and serve Our Lord Jesus Christ, welcoming everyone, deepening our faith, helping our neighbors and caring for creation."

Much to do, but all of it is doable with God's help!

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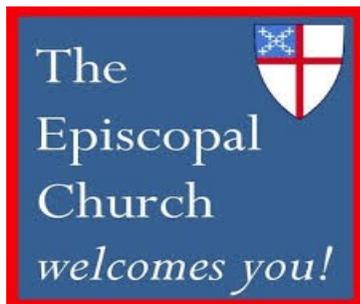
Calendar of Upcoming Events

- ◆ Saturday Feb. 10th 7:00-9:00 pm Music Concert—Jim Castaneda
- ◆ Tuesday Feb. 13th 5:30 pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.
- ◆ Wednesday Feb. 14th 12:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service- All Saints Chapel
- ◆ Sunday Feb. 25th 12:30 pm Annual Meeting—Potluck lunch

Continuing Events

- ◆ Tuesdays & Thursdays: 10:00 am Morning Prayer
- ◆ Sundays: 10:30 am Holy Eucharist & Sunday School for children
- ◆ Wednesdays: 9:00 am EfM (Education For Ministry)

If you have information or any fun photos you would like included in the monthly newsletter, please contact Cindy Geibig at cindynkilo@yahoo.com.



Wherever you are in your life with God -- whether a hesitant searcher or a regular churchgoer -- we invite you to worship with us and to think of St. Stephen's as your spiritual home.

We meet in the Main Sanctuary for Eucharist at 10:30 AM each Sunday, followed by fellowship in Miller Hall. Our office is in the A-frame building with All Saints Chapel.