



Building Bridges of Caring, Compassion, and Civility

### **MARCH 2019 NEWSLETTER**

In his book, "What's So Amazing About Grace?" Philip Yancey describes a conference on comparative religion where experts from around the world debated which belief, if any, was unique to the Christian faith. C. S. Lewis happened to enter the room during the discussion. When he was told the topic was Christianity's unique contribution among the world's religions, Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

Lewis was right. No other religion places grace at its very center. It's a revolutionary idea. As Yancey puts it, grace "seems to go against every instinct of humanity." We are much more at ease with tit for tat, cause and effect, getting what you deserve. Grace is different. It is the unmerited favor of God, unconditional love given to the undeserving. It's difficult for us to understand because it goes against common sense. "Grace defies reason and logic," says Bono, the lead singer of U2. "Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions."

If you find yourself in the company of people whose hearts have been captured by grace, count yourself fortunate. They love us in spite of our messy lives; they stay connected to us through our struggles, always holding out the hope of redemption. When relationships are broken, it's grace that causes people not to give up, but to reach out and work through misunderstandings with sensitivity and transparency.

You don't sense hard edges or self-righteous judgment from gracious people. There's a tenderness about them that opens doors that had been bolted shut. People who have been transformed by grace have a special place in their hearts for those living on the margins of society. They're moved by stories of suffering and step into the breach to help and to heal. Joy in Christ is filled with people like that.

Living a grace-filled life is hard. Most of us, when we feel wronged, want payback. Our first impulse, when hurt or offended, is to strike out, justifying our anger in the name of fairness. When Yancey was young, he rejected the church because he found so little grace there. There is a tendency among some people of faith to come across as holier than thou, more quick to judge than to forgive. Jesus ran into this all through his ministry, which may explain why he was more comfortable with the unclean, the lowly and the outcast, than with religious authorities. Yet when we see grace in action – in random acts of kindness, in generosity, or in self-sacrifice – it can move us like nothing else

As we enter the Lenten season, we will focus on the scope of grace in our personal lives and in the life of the church. Remembering Paul's admonition that we have this treasure in earthen vessels – literally, "in clay pots" – we will explore what it means to live by grace. Our Sunday worship will begin with a visual reminder that we are "broken vessels" who are called by God's "Amazing Grace" to share a new life together. We will reflect on God's word in stories of individuals whose lives reflect God's grace. Our mid-week soup suppers will conclude with music and reflection on how God's grace can surprise us when we least expect it.

I invite you to join us on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening for the next six weeks as we rediscover how God can fill our "broken vessels" with his amazing grace, love and life.

Pr. Russ



## **Brief update from the February 16, 2019 Council Retreat**

Present: Pam Borgeson, Vicki Burke, Lisa Clairmont, Pat Gladbach, Audrey McNevin, Jeri Screnci, Candy Stone, Jeff Stone, Lee Ann Trigler, Pastor Russ

### ***Building Bridges of Caring, Compassion and Civility*** - how are we doing as relates to our Mission?

- Overall, the consensus is that we are on the right track in our outreach efforts. We learned a lot in the last 6-8 months and we need to work with others who may already be established in doing things we are thinking of doing – instead of trying to just do it ourselves.
- Warm Valentine’s dinner touched many although only 4 guests joined us.
- We agreed it would be better to go into the community instead of asking them to come to our church. For example, local seniors are in need and we could reach them through working with the Abington Senior Center, take meals to them/use their facilities for preparation. We could look at the local shelters as well as the Veteran’s groups.
- Partnering with other churches and community groups would share the work and responsibilities.
- Let’s remember our own members who are in need.

### ***How do we Build Bridges of Civility?*** How can we model civility today in our society?

- Lisa said that some with different political beliefs in our church sometimes feel like “outsiders.” Should we have open discussions on controversial topics? Jeri noted that we should stress what we have in common as opposed to our differences. Pastor said that we could have discussions on these topics for those who choose to attend.
- Vicki suggested we start modeling civility by saying “please and thank you, allowing someone to go ahead of you in traffic or the grocery store line.” Jeff noted that this used to be commonplace and in the past you wouldn’t expect a thank you wave in traffic situations.
- What about compromise? Each side gives up something to move forward - can we model that as part of civility?
- Leeann spoke to the need for active listening, as we all want to be heard. It was suggested that we hold a group discussion on practicing active listening exercises.

### ***Mission Projects for 2019***

- We questioned if we should continue mission solely around feeding the hungry or expand? We agreed that we do food well. We have learned a lot about organization, preparation, and setup. We can be the “catalyst” or ‘how to’ resource to involve other churches and organizations, inviting them to join us.
- Jeff will attend the March meeting of the Abington pastors group to present this idea of working together on mission projects.
- Discussion regarding needs of children for school supplies could coordinate with teachers. This is something that we would like to work on, and JIC could be a drop off point for collection of supplies year round.
- Agreed that we want to avoid burnout so we will plan a couple of major projects per year and smaller ones that are not as complex or time intensive.

**Next Council Meeting is Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:15 a.m.**

***Our Mission: To build bridges of Caring, Compassion, and Civility***

## **Notes from the Worship & Parish Life meeting on February 17, 2019**

Meeting began at 11:30 with opening prayer from Candy Stone. Present were Pr. Russ, Candy Stone, Vicki Burke, Audrey McNevin, Pat Gladbach, Lee-Ann Trigler, Roswitha O'Hara and Carol Porter.

Lee-Ann reported on "Warm Your Soles". Two bags of socks were received from the American Legion. Lee-Ann will be taking photos of all socks collected before distributing to Big Brother/Big Sister.

"It takes a Village" – Lee-Ann will check disciple list for more volunteers to cook/bring meals/do shopping or errands/doctor's visits, etc. for our homebound members.

Pastor reported on confirmation. The first retreat was successful. They watched the movie "The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe". Lee-Ann led them in a Yoga class and Audrey helped them make a banner. Retreat to Calumet will be March 29 – 31, 2019, with a final retreat sometime late May or early June.

Valentine Homeless Dinner – 4 people showed up and 2 of the women may come back for Lent. We will plan another in the future. There will be a senior lunch in June.

Ash Wednesday is March 6th. Helper sheet has gone up and dinner will be at 6pm with the service at 7pm. All Saints is working on the theme for Lent and just soup and bread will be served. Wednesday night Lenten services will begin with dinner at 5:30pm followed by the service at 6:30pm. There will be no Bible Study during Lent.

Music – Adding more traditional hymns during Lent and Holy Week. Our theme for Sunday worship will be "God's grace comes to us even though we are broken vessels".

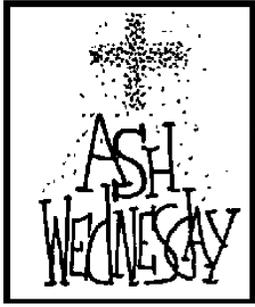
Noreen suggested we get together and view "Won't You Be My Neighbor" but some feel it's illegal to watch as a group at church so suggested it should be viewed in someone's house. More discussion after Easter.

We will be using last years' service for Good Friday.

**Next meeting is Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 1pm.**

### **Oremus + Let us Pray**

In the sure and certain hope of the resurrection,  
Eleanore McNeill died on February 4, 2019.  
Eleanore was a long time Choir Member, served on the Altar Guild,  
the Care Committee, and Worship & Music committee.  
Please keep her daughter-in-law, Carla Hanlon, her niece, Catherine Kupp,  
and nephew, Gerard McNeil, in your prayers.



**Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>**

Using ashes as a sign of repentance is an ancient practice, often mentioned in the Bible (Jonah 3:5-9; Job 42:6; Jeremiah 6:26; Matthew 11:21). We use them as a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

Simple Congregational Supper 6:00 p.m.  
Worship with ashes and Communion 7:00 p.m.

*The sanctuary will be open for private prayer and reflection between noon and 1:00 p.m.  
Pastor will be present at that time for the imposition of ashes (if you are unable to attend in the evening).*

**Ecumenical Wednesdays with All Saints' Episcopal Church  
"Healing the Broken Heart"**

*March 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>*

Soup Supper at **5:30** p.m.  
Prayer and Conversation at **6:30** p.m.

This Lent we will share our traditional gatherings with our sisters and brothers from All Saints' Episcopal in Whitman, and any other guests and friends you would like to invite.

- Week 1: Courage for the Fearful Heart
- Week 2: Comfort for the Broken Heart
- Week 3: Prayer for the Hopeful Heart
- Week 4: Grace for the "At Risk" Heart
- Week 5: Life for the Desiring Heart

**EASTER FLOWERS**



Here's a wonderful way to adorn Joy in Christ's altar for Easter! Place a lily or tulip plant on the altar to glorify God. Plants may be dedicated in honor or memory of a loved one. After worship on Easter, take it home or leave it to share with one of our homebound members.

Just fill in the form below and return it in the offering plate on Sunday (or send it in to the office). The deadline for ordering is **April 7th**. The cost of each plant is \$10.00.

I/we wish to order (enter the number of plants you wish to order)

# \_\_\_\_\_ Easter Lily                      # \_\_\_\_\_ Tulip Plant

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ phone # \_\_\_\_\_

To the Glory of God \_\_\_\_\_ OR

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_ OR

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate amount enclosed with your request: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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*An excerpt from Carolyn Moomaw Chilton from an article in "buildingfaith"*

## **THIS LENT, ADD INSTEAD OF SUBTRACT**

*"Whatever you choose - adding or subtracting - the point is to do something that feeds your soul without draining your energy or making you resent the time. Be realistic, keep it simple and enjoy!"*

Many years ago I explained to my rector that I didn't like giving up something for Lent. "I don't quite see the connection," I said. "What does giving up chocolate have to do with my spiritual life?" Wise man that he was, and still is, he replied, "There may not be a connection for you. Why don't you take on something instead?" And so I did, and so I still do. And it works for me. Maybe it will for you too.

**Read as a Lenten Discipline:** This could be on your own, with a family member, in a group or on a social site like Goodreads. I've done this a number of years and my books have ranged from spiritual and religious to fiction. Some of my favorites have been:

- *Reconciliation: Preparing for Confession in the Episcopal Church* by Martin Smith
- *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* by Joan Chittister
- *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives* by Wayne Mueller
- *The Return of Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* by Henri Nouwen
- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

**Feed the artist in you:** Yes, you have one in there! If you're like me, you just need to give yourself permission to not be Picasso or Jane Austen and then you'll be fine! **Write.** Try journaling; write some memoir or stories from your life; start a blog even if it is only for you. Sign up for Tumblr and read the blogs there and start your own. My husband and daughter and I did this - just the 3 of us - for Advent and it was wonderful. We shared photos around daily themes for each day of Advent. **Paint.** I recommend Roger Hutchison's "[The Painting Table](#)." Take photographs and share them with friends and family. **Garden** - indoors or out depending on where you live.

**Build Relationships: Commit to dinner** one or more times a week with family or friends. Keep it simple. It can be fast food, take out, pot luck... the point is time together. **Invite** someone you don't see often to lunch - maybe a different friend each week. This could also be someone you'd like to know better. **Write a card** or call someone each week. **Volunteer.** Visit at local retirement homes; drive folks to doctor's appointments or to the grocery store.

**Care for yourself:** There are many ways to deepen spirituality by caring for your body, mind, and soul. Commit to an **exercise** regimen - if this is new for you, keep it simple and easy. Take a spiritual **retreat** during Lent. It can be ½ day, a day or even a full weekend. Find a spiritual director and schedule an appointment. Get out of the office during the day - **walk** around the block, **go out** for lunch, **sit** in the park. **Sleep.** **Worship.** This can be hard for those who are employed by the church or have volunteer positions that make Sundays very busy. Perhaps you can attend a morning or evening service at another church near you where you can sit quietly and worship.



*Be realistic, keep it simple and enjoy!*

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## WHAT IS GOD UP TO?

By Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

What is to be done? Our congregations are growing older and smaller. At least 40 percent of our congregations have an average weekly worship attendance of 50 or less. ELCA membership decreases by 70,000 people a year, or roughly the loss of a synod per year. Clergy retirements outnumber new candidates for ministry. Financial pressures and building maintenance create stress. There is a dearth of people in their 20s and 30s in our pews. How do we change this? How do we reverse the trends?

These are anxious questions that come from anxious people across this church. We aren't the only ones asking them—just about every mainline denomination, including the non-Latino population of the Roman Catholic Church, is in the same boat. Even some megachurches are showing signs of plateau or decline. And this is not exclusive to the Christian community. I once attended a national conference of Muslims where one workshop was titled “Un-Mosqued to Mosqued: How to Get the Young Muslim Back to the Masjid.”

Some now see the decline of the church in general, and the ELCA in particular, as inevitable. The response can be to turn our churches into bunkers with our congregations sheltering within the walls or to try every new program that breathlessly promises to attract people to our congregations. Neither is an effective or faithful long-term strategy.

I think we are asking the wrong questions.

The questions we are asking have to do about us: “What can we do?” They express loss and grief and fear—loss and grief for what we were and fear about what we will become. Not only do these questions not lead to productive answers, they also don't point to hope. It's as if the church's one foundation rests on us and our efforts.

I think we need to ask: “What is God up to?”

It's clear to me that we are living in a time of transition, especially for the Western church. I don't know how long this transition will last nor do I have a clear vision of what the church is becoming.

The good news is that you and I don't have to have a clear vision because God does. “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:18-19). These words of hope were spoken to the Jews who were stuck in exile. They had lost their land, their temple and their king—the pillars of their identity. Likewise, the church has lost social status and relevance in 21st-century American culture.

For Israel and the church this would be a hopeless situation, except that God is faithful. When the Lord admonished, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old,” this wasn't a command to forget God's past saving work, but to believe that God was still acting. This is true for us today. When we stop asking what we can do to fix the church and start asking what God is up to, we open ourselves up to the life-giving promise of God's future.

Then we are also open to more questions: How is the Spirit reshaping the church? How will Christ use us as Christ's living body in the world?

If we want to attract people to our congregations to rebuild a memory, God will not bless our efforts. But if we—grabbed by the Spirit in baptism, changed by the word, intimately and lovingly connected

to Jesus and each other in communion, and set free by grace to serve the neighbor—invite all people into true life, then we shall become part of the answer.

This takes attention and devotion. Worship, prayer, Scripture study, generosity and service—not in order to save the church, but in response to the new life God has given us in Christ.

And one more thing: in God’s inscrutable wisdom, God has chosen human hands and voices to tell and welcome.

## SUNDAY DECIPLES

DATE	ASSISTING MINISTER	READER	TECH SUPPORT	GRUSHER	WORSHIP SET-UP	COFFEE HOUR
MAR 3 <sup>RD</sup>	PAT GLADBACH	LEE-ANN TRIGLER	STEPHANIE BURKE	JEAN PETERSON	JERI SCRENCI	LEE-ANN TRIGLER & KATHY REMES
MAR 10 <sup>TH</sup>	LISA CLAIRMONT	PAT GLADBACH	LEE-ANN TRIGLER	CAROL PORTER	GEORGE PORTER	CANDY STONE & JERI SCRENCI
MAR 17 <sup>TH</sup>	JEFF STONE	KATHY REMES	LISA CLAIRMONT	GEORGE PORTER	JEFF STONE	CAROL & GEORGE PORTER
MAR 24 <sup>TH</sup>	NOREEN DIONNE	EMILY CLAIRMONT	JEFF STONE	PAT GLADBACH	MIKE REMES	AUDREY MCNEVIN & JEAN PETERSON
MAR 31 <sup>ST</sup>	LEE-ANN TRIGLER	LISA CLAIMONT	STEPHANIE BURKE	JERI SCRENCI	JEFF STONE	LEE-ANN TRILGER & JOY ANN FRANNEY



### MARCH

- 1<sup>st</sup>: Kai Hoku Jazon
- 8<sup>th</sup>: Anita Smith
- 9<sup>th</sup>: Max Djusberg
- 10<sup>th</sup>: Bob Fehl
- 10<sup>th</sup>: Matthew Nichols
- 15<sup>th</sup>: George Sullivan
- 16<sup>th</sup>: Karla Rasche
- 16<sup>th</sup>: Jack Kirby
- 18<sup>th</sup>: Lisa Jazon
- 24<sup>th</sup>: Steffan DeLong
- 29<sup>th</sup>: Elizabeth Remes

### APRIL

- 1<sup>st</sup>: Beverly Alexandre
- 4<sup>th</sup>: Martha Ratliff
- 9<sup>th</sup>: Oliver Hall
- 11<sup>th</sup>: Kathy Remes
- 25<sup>th</sup>: Mark Williamson
- 29<sup>th</sup>: Joe Rogers

**Joy in Christ Lutheran Church**  
**21 South Bedford Street, Abington, MA 02351**  
**(781) 878-3394**  
[jicchurch@outlook.com](mailto:jicchurch@outlook.com)

**Pr. Russ Norris is usually in the office on Wednesday and by appointment. It is always best to call first, as visits and meetings sometime alter the schedule. Pr. Norris is available at 774.487.8734(cell) or 508.534.9307 (home) or at [rbnorrisjr@gmail.com](mailto:rbnorrisjr@gmail.com)**

**MARCH 2019**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 <i>TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD</i>  <b>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP</b>	4 <b>7:00 p.m. YOGA</b>  GIRL SCOUTS TROOP 66027 4:00 -5:00 p.m.	5  6:00 p.m. TOPS	6 <i>ASH WEDNESDAY</i> <b>Soup, Sandwich &amp; Worship 6:00 p.m.</b>	7  GIRL SCOUTS TROOP 62324 5:00-6:30 p.m.	8  <b>CLEANERS</b>	9 <b>WHITMAN WELLNESS 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.</b> <i>Turn your clocks ahead before going to bed.</i>
10 <i>FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT</i>  <b>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP</b>	11 <b>7:00 p.m. YOGA</b>	12  6:00 p.m. TOPS	13 <i>NOTE NEW START TIME:</i> <b>Soup, Sandwich &amp; Worship 5:30 p.m.</b>	14	15	16
17 <i>SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT</i> <b>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP</b> 11:15 a.m. COUNCIL MEETING	18 <b>7:00 p.m. YOGA</b>	19  6:00 p.m. TOPS	20 <i>NOTE NEW START TIME:</i> <b>Soup, Sandwich &amp; Worship 5:30 p.m.</b>	21	22  <b>CLEANERS</b>	26
24 <i>THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT</i>  <b>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP</b>	25 <b>7:00 p.m. YOGA</b>	26  6:00 p.m. TOPS	27 <i>NOTE NEW START TIME:</i> <b>Soup, Sandwich &amp; Worship 5:30 p.m.</b>	28	29	30
31 <i>FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT</i>  <b>10:00 a.m. WORSHIP</b>						



***DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR BEFORE GOING TO BED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup>***