



GOD & TEARS



Not too long ago, I preached a sermon about Jesus weeping at the grave of his friend Lazarus. I mentioned that I had a theology about God and tears that I would share at some point. Well, this is your lucky month!

This issue of tears and God really hit home for me when I was serving a congregation in Connecticut. Over a span of a few months I had talked with several people who told me that they could not attend church services anymore because they were afraid that they were going to cry and they didn't want to be embarrassed or interrupt others around them. Even though these are common reasons that people give, the reality is that during these times of struggle and sorrow the best place to be is in church!

All of these individuals were wrestling with some painful thing happening in their life that was monopolizing their thoughts and feelings. When this happens, we tend to pull back from people and from God and try to deal with it by ourselves.

Being overwhelmed and alone can disrupt our jobs, our relationships, our faith and stability. We have been socialized to believe that we can take care of ourselves and that we are supposed to always present a strong and confident demeanor. Tears, however, reveal a softer side to us that many people view as a sign of weakness. So in an effort to maintain a sense of control we try at all costs not to cry in front of anyone.

Whether they are tears of sadness, frustration, pain, fear, guilt or joy, tears always signify that we are overcome with some emotion or experience and our body needs a release.

Tears remind us that we cannot and should not try to keep our emotions bottled up inside. Tears connect us to our humanity, to our imperfections to our hopes and dreams. Tears push us to admit that we are not in total control, that we need assistance because we cannot make it through this life on our own. We need each other for comfort, consolation, encouragement and support. Tears bind us to our relationships – with self, others and God.

We cry at those moments when we are most vulnerable, when we have let down our guard and allowed the outside world to come in. Our tears pour forth when something or someone has touched us so deeply. These are the moments we realize that there is something greater than ourselves. Tears link us to the reality that we are incomplete, that we are missing something and that we long for wholeness, restoration and reconciliation. In short, we are longing for God.

Think about it. What does God desire most of all? I think it is our complete trust and faith and our acknowledgment that we need God in our lives. Often the only time we may actually admit this is when we are most vulnerable – when joy, sadness, loss, illness or pain surround us. It is at these times that our tears begin to flow and we are most open to allowing God into our lives. Tears tell us that God is with us, right now in the midst of everything.

I firmly believe that tears are a sign that God is surrounding us, loving us and holding us in that very moment.

Christian community should be an open, understanding place where we can express our pain, sorrow and joy. God wants us to bring our entire selves to worship and place all of our thoughts and feelings in front of the altar so that we may be healed and made whole.

So the next time you find yourself fighting back tears - let them flow and look for the presence of God within and around you. It may be God knocking on the door to your heart!

Blessings,

Fr. Steve

Worship Opportunities
All are Welcome



Sunday Services

June 4 - 9:30 am Holy Eucharist

June 11 - 9:30 am Morning Prayer

June 18 - 9:30 am Holy Eucharist

June 25 - 9:30 am Morning Prayer

Ministry Fair Report 2017

Three of our Nativity members attended the diocesan Ministry Fair held on Saturday, May 6th at our cathedral. Here is what they had to say about the experience.

Beverly Bryan

I was fortunate to be able to attend this year's Ministry Fair with Dee & Mary. The keynote speaker was Heidi Kim from The Diversity Task Force (Barth Hall). Heidi shared her personal experiences with discrimination and her life-long learning about the importance of inclusion. Members of the Diocese also spoke on the 8 Guidelines for Equity & Inclusion:

1. "Try on" (walk in another's shoes)
2. It's OK to disagree
3. It is not OK to blame, shame, or attack self or others
4. Practice "self-focus"
5. Notice both process & content
6. Practice "but/and" thinking (use "and" rather than "but")
7. Be aware of intent & impact
8. Confidentiality

We each selected 2 different workshops to attend; I participated in:

Ministry for the Elderly lead by the St. Anne's Guild. This group of 2 priests & several lay persons volunteer to provide services to persons in elder facilities in the greater Waterford area. It is obvious to me that this is a ministry of love for all. Other attendees shared some of their work with the aged communities. I asked about the Senior Ministry program I had participated in years ago, they directed me to the Ministry Developer.

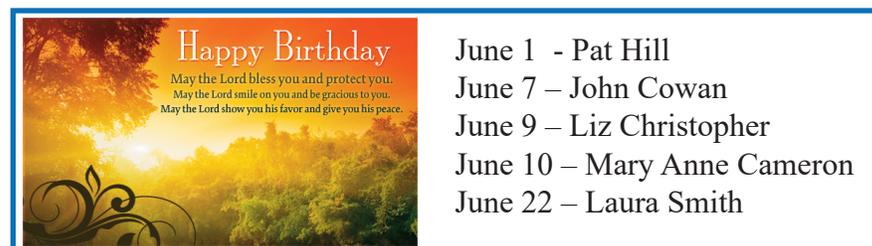
Beaded Bundles: An experience in art & worship was my second workshop presented by Jelane Richardson of St. John's, Royal Oak. I learned that two thirds of the global population uses prayer beads. We were shown how to make our own beads to use with our prayer bundles/amulets; decorated packets with your written prayer/word placed inside, using scrap material, beads, feathers, hand stitching & the guiding Spirit. I found it to be very reflective, calming, and meditative.

It was an inspiring day; hearing how we experience discrimination differently, each of us learning and growing from each other's experiences, as well as how we are sharing our ministry to our communities.

Mary Creager

I attended two workshops at the May 6, 2017 Diocesan Ministry Fair:

Small Congregations: Joe Summers & Church of the Incarnation ... 'Small' for many people means 50 or 60 people – not 20 as we often have at Nativity! In small groups, all individuals need to open themselves to be beloved, cared for, affirmed, and vulnerable. Some folks seeking a church home are dealing with such loss, pain or other struggles that they feel the need to 'hide' in a larger congregation. Although small congregations may feel that they 'can't do very much', the process of working together in harmonious relationship is as important as getting the work done.



MINISTRY FAIR

Community Outreach Ministry: Robert Dawson, All Saints Pontiac ... All Saints' outreach activities include a produce market, a tutoring program, and a resale shop, serving the poor and unemployed people of Pontiac. Networking and cooperation with other community groups are vital to this ministry. Others will want to help, if you define a path and give them the opportunity. This was a great workshop for members of small struggling congregations, helping them think 'out of the box' about ways to collaborate with other churches and groups in their communities.

Lots of good food for thought!

Dee Damico

The keynote speaker was Heidi Kim, staff officer of the Episcopal Church for racial reconciliation. She introduced our task force, described the guidelines for equity and inclusion, and also gave several examples of racial inequality. I was particularly moved when she shared how long standing friendships may have been broken due to our recent presidential election. Her quote, "A right relationship is more important than being right", will stay with me a long time.

I attended the break out session about Sanctuary led by Oscar Castaneda of Lansing. Mr. Castaneda addressed the recent decision of Lansing to withdraw as a Sanctuary City. He informed us of the reasons for immigration and how it is to be done legally as well as the difficulties and threats that immigrants face. He also talked about what it takes for a congregation to become a Sanctuary.

I also attended a session called, Engaging in Difficult Topics – Pub Theology, which was co-facilitated by Peter Trumbore, a parishioner at St. Mary's in Lake Orion and Laurel Dahill the priest of that congregation. They discussed how they engage in open and honest dialogue about God outside of the building in the larger community. They shared their guidelines and how well it is working. For references and contacts about this ministry, please see me.



OUTREACH UPDATE

At our May Outreach meeting we discussed ways to organize and structure all of our outreach activities. We decided to create an outreach calendar that will run from July 2017 thru June 2018. The plan is to select six outreach activities and do one every other month. These will be placed on the calendar and published for all members to see.

We are asking for input from all of you to give us sug-

gestions on outreach ideas. We will collect all this information and decide on which activities to place on the calendar. Remember, this is our Nativity outreach ministry and we want to engage it together!

Please share any suggestions you have with one of our committee members: Bev Bryan, Dee Damico and Diane Wittlinger.

JUNE CALENDAR EVENTS

- June 4 - BC Meeting after coffee hour
- June 11 - Diversity & Inclusion Presentation
during coffee hour
- June 18 - Sacred Spaces Meeting after
coffee hour

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT MAY 2017 Tim Wittlinger

I am pleased to report that we have reached a tentative agreement with Pastor Karl Todd concerning the renewal of our lease with New Outlook Ministries. I say "tentative" because Pastor Todd has agreed to the language but he needs to discuss it with a few of his members. But it looks as final as we can expect at this stage. Of primary significance is the fact that we will be able to use the Sanctuary until 11:00 each Sunday. That will avoid rushing through the service, and we can go back to having announcements at the end of the service in the Sanctuary. We will close the Common Room divider, so during coffee hour, we can be on the kitchen side, and the NOM Catechism class can be on the window side. At Pastor Karl's request, and after discussion with our Treasurer, we will offer NOM a \$100 per month reduction in rent from May 1 until December 31 of 2017. We will discuss the rent amount for 2018 after our canvass is complete and the situation with Branches and Bridges is finalized.

Concerning Branches And Bridges, Jennifer Morgan will shortly be furnishing us a letter from someone in authority to the effect that our planned operation will be in compliance with State regulations (even though those regulations apply only to programs receiving funding from the State, which ours will not). Hopefully the program will now meet Diocesan requirements and can move forward.

I attended the Sacred Spaces meeting and as you will see from their report, plans have been made for the next season of the Church Year. The Nave is quipped to hang colorful banners at several locations. We will search our storage areas and see if we can locate several to hang, reflecting the current season of the Church Year.

SOS Dinner at St. David's was a success with many of our members helping out, and intermingling with the SOS guests during dinner. We also helped with the morning drive duty ferrying the guests to their selected locations. St. David's was extremely grateful for our assistance. We should plan to do the same next year. Fr. Steve took a number of pictures. Be sure to pick up a copy of the May newsletter where many of them are shown.

The Theater Party (Sweet Charity) will be held on Sunday, May 21, 2017 at 2:00 P.M. at Village Players, 34660 Woodward Avenue in Birmingham. We have sold 21 tickets so far. This kind of program seems to catch on at Nativity, and as such, we will be planning several more of these next fall and winter.

Please make sure that your pledges are paid up before you leave for the Summer. And pass that request on to others as well.

Jr. Warden's Report • May 2017

As I read over my list of concerns for Nativity Church provided during the May Bishop Committee some reflection comes to mind.

- We talked about mulch. I have tried to contact 'Oscar' the individual that Main's Landscape suggested as a reliable person to spread Hardwood Mulch.
- The Narthex table is being looked at by Chad, for which I thank him sincerely.
- Thanks go to Chad for completing the repair of the furnace exhaust pipe outside the Common Room.
- Alarm Services for the Church is still being worked on.
- Staple on-line order service has been successfully provided to order many necessary supplies.
- The broken pane of glass in the Common Room exterior door remains a concern.
- Our wobbly USPS Post Box needs attention.

I will look into these last two items to try to get movement on these two topics.

More Later, God Bless Nativity Church,
Russ Hiatt

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BISHOP'S COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

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Russ Hiatt – Jr. Warden

Mary Creager – Recording Secretary

Sharon McInay – Treasurer

Russ Hiatt - Bookkeeper

Beverly Bryan, May Kuofie, Margaret Sands-Goldstein