



ST. JOHN'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

The Red Door

WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

Monthly newsletter of the people and ministries of
St. John's Episcopal Church



MARCH 2018 - Volume 4 Issue 3



Atonement - What is it and Why is it So Important for Christians?

Since we will be celebrating Easter in a few short weeks, it is timely to explore our theological understanding of why Jesus died and what his death meant for people then and now. Our English term "atonement" is a translation of the Latin word *reconciliatio*. It has since come to be defined as a way of understanding the work of Christ or the benefits that Christ gained for believers and how we are saved by his suffering, death and resurrection.

To begin with, it will be helpful to go back and look at the Jewish understanding of atonement since our Christian concept developed from the Jewish perspective. The Day of Atonement was an annual sanctuary purification rite that was observed annually in Israel ten days after the fall new year (Lev 16:29-34). It appears that this purification was necessary because Aaron's two sons had been slaughtered by the Lord in the sanctuary for offering unholy fire to the Lord and the corpses had polluted it (Lev 10:1-7). Atonement was understood as satisfaction given for wrongdoing, a way to become reconciled with the Lord by making amends. For the Israelites and for most ancient peoples, violation of the world order led to punishment by divine powers and only atonement could prevent or end such punishment.

The first Jewish disciples of Jesus connected this idea of atonement to his life, death and resurrection and taught this concept to others in order to explain why Jesus had to die. Even though Paul's primary message was about our redemption through Christ's atoning death it appears through his multiple attempts to explain this meaning that he may not have been exactly sure how this atonement actually worked. And Paul wasn't the only one. It is estimated that throughout the New Testament that there are 22-25 different theories of atonement so from the very beginning of the Christian movement, there has been more than one way to view or understand Christ's atonement for our sins. The following four theories have been prominent throughout Christian history.

Christus Victor

By the second and third centuries, church fathers such as Irenaeus and Origen began to write out their understandings of our redemption through Christ's death. Since a common belief in those days was that the devil had obtained control over humanity, these two men postulated that God had to pay off Satan with a ransom in order to redeem or liberate human beings from the powers of evil. This ransom was paid by Jesus dying on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and thereby triumphed over the devil. This victory through resurrection provides the name Christus Victor or Christ the Victor.

Satisfaction

Anselm of Canterbury emerged in the eleventh century and articulated this theory of atonement. In simple terms, Anselm used the chivalric

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Worship Opportunities All are Welcome



Sunday Services

Mar 4 8:30 & 10:30 am Morning Prayer
Guest Preacher: Tim Wittlinger from
Nativity Church

Mar 11 8:30 & 10:30 am Holy Eucharist

Mar 18 8:30 and 10:30 am Morning Prayer

Mar 25 Palm Sunday
8:30 & 10:30 am Holy Eucharist

Holy Week

Mar 29 Maundy Thursday 7:30 pm

Mar 30 Good Friday Service 12:00 pm
Stations of the Cross 1:00 pm

Apr 1 Easter Sunday 11:30 am

Tuesday Worship

Mar 13 10:30 am Holy Eucharist at Hope Health Care

Mar 27 No Service at Hope Health Care

Wednesday Worship

Mar 7 10am Bible Study
11:45 am Holy Eucharist

Mar 14 10:00 am Bible Study
11:45 am Holy Eucharist

Mar 21 10am Bible Study
11:45 am Holy Eucharist

Mar 28 10 am Bible Study
11:45 am Holy Eucharist

ATONEMENT *continued from page 1*

language of his time to shape a theory describing sin as the human way of dishonoring God. People owed honor to God just as peasants and squires owed honor and loyalty to the feudal overlord. However, men had no power to render satisfaction to God for their massive disloyalty to God through sin. According to the codes of chivalry in Anselm's time, one atoned for a crime either by receiving punishment or by providing satisfaction to the injured person. Since God did not want to punish humans forever and since humans had no means to render satisfaction to God's injured honor, the deity made restitution for humanity by sending Jesus to earth in human form to die on the cross and thereby obtain forgiveness of sins.

Moral

Abelard (1079 – 1142) developed the moral atonement concept. In this image, the death of Jesus is seen as a loving act of God aimed toward humanity. God the Father shows love to us sinners by giving us his most precious possession – his Son to die for us. This theory emphasized God's love in the work of atonement and claimed that when humans look upon the death of Jesus on the cross it simultaneously brings repentance and God's love. Abelard thought Jesus' death was a loving act of God designed to get the attention of sinners and reveal the love of God.

Substitution

As the Renaissance approached and the medieval worldview collapsed, the three previous ways of understanding the atonement began to fade. The Renaissance was a time of great interest in the revival of ancient law, hence it was reasonable to expect the Reformers to work out their theories of atonement in legal terms grounded in the new political thought of the sixteenth century. Thus Calvin and others spoke of the justice of God the judge, of the divine law of punishment that could not be ignored, and of the infinite character of human sin that deserved infinite harsh punishment. But according to the Reformers, God is both just and merciful. Therefore, in infinite mercy God provided a substitute who would bear the punishment for human sin. Jesus Christ came to offer himself as a substitute for humans. He took their punishment upon himself. Thus, the Reformers provided a penal substitution theory of atonement.

From the beginning, there have always been multiple types of atonement theories operating within the Church. These models were not complete in and of themselves but they have served as the foundational understandings for how Christ's atoning work is redemptive for humanity.

Our understanding of Christ's atonement is an ongoing work in progress so it makes sense that scholars continue to write about how Christ's atonement saves us. It is not meant to be a change in belief in the redemptive work of Christ, rather a broader look at what other aspects of Christ's life, ministry, death and resurrection are redemptive. These insights may lead to the development of new theories or to the revision of some of the classic approaches.

Since the death and resurrection of Jesus is central to Christianity, have you given much thought lately to what this means for you? Do you identify with one or more of the classic theories mentioned above or do you have a different understanding? During the remainder of our Lenten season, I encourage all of us to think about our personal theology of atonement so that when we arrive at Holy Week, we may have a deeper understanding of what Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection mean for us.

*Blessings,
Fr. Steve*



ASHES

Thanks to everyone who brought in their palms from last year. We burned them to create the ashes we used on Valentines Day!



Episcopal Transition Committee - Searching for a New Bishop

Our Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Wendell Gibbs has announced his retirement which will begin on December 31, 2019. Our Standing Committee for the diocese has put together a search team for the new bishop and they will begin their work this month. If you would like to participate in the second phase of the search called the Transitions Committee, you are encouraged to apply by March 14th.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: What are the responsibilities of this committee?

The focus of the Transitions Committee is on events planning and management and on hospitality. Specific responsibilities include:

- Conducting the walkabouts (the tour of the diocese by the candidates for bishop so that those in the diocese have a chance to meet and interact with the candidates.
- Assisting as necessary with the Special Convention to elect the new bishop
- Managing details for the ordination/consecration of the new bishop
- Planning a farewell event for Bishop Gibbs
- Helping to create a smooth transition for the new bishop
- Pastoral care and thanks to the candidates not chosen

Given these responsibilities, the Transitions Committee will be most active from February 2019 through February 2020.

Q: What are the qualifications for members of the Transitions Committee?

- Experience in event planning and management
- Hospitality
- Creative thinking
- Good networking and people skills
- Ability to deal calmly with unexpected events
- Ability to devote sufficient time and energy to the committee
- Good organizational skills
- Enthusiastic and energetic

Q. How do I apply for the Transitions Committee or nominate someone?

Go to the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan (EDOMI) website and you will find the form on the home page. There is a mandatory retreat on April 13-14, 2018.

Holy Week & Easter Worship Times

At our recent vestry meeting we set the times for our services during Holy Week and Easter to accommodate Fr. Steve's schedule which will allow him to be at St. John's and Nativity on these same days. Time changes for services are being made at both congregations. There will just be one Holy Eucharist service on Palm Sunday and Easter. Thank you for your understanding and flexibility as we prepare to celebrate these important days in our church year.

Service Days & Times at St. John's

Palm Sunday	March 25	11:30 am
Maundy Thursday	March 29	7:30 pm
	(Vigil time to be kept until 12:00 am)	
Good Friday	March 30	12:00 pm
	(stations of the cross immediately following)	
Easter Sunday	April 1	11:30 am



Easter Flowers

Lilies may be ordered now through Monday, March 26. Minimum donation for each potted plant ordered is \$15. Please use the flower envelopes to submit your donation and include your loved ones name(s) to be honored or remembered. Please place the envelope in the offering plate or drop it off at the church office. Thank You!



SAVE THE DATE!!



Featuring

Arts * Crafts *

Baked Goods * and More!

Lunch Available

Saturday, May 12, 2018

Noon - 5 pm

FAT TUESDAY! On February 13th we celebrated Shrove Tuesday with a delicious pancake supper! Special thanks to Bill Copland, Ed & Sue Parker, Ken & Jean Coyne, Don & Vi Streeter, Phil Rossman and everyone who came out to enjoy the meal. You all made this a very special evening!



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facebook We're on Facebook:
 St. John's Episcopal Church - Westland MI

FOOD PANTRY OPEN
 Thursday, March 8,
 New Hours: Noon-2 pm
 *Please bring donations in
 by Sunday, March 4



MARCH EVENTS CALENDAR

Sundays:
 Sun. Mar. 4 Breakfast at 9:30 am
 Daughters of the King at noon
 Sun. Mar. 11 Vestry Meeting at noon
 Sun. Mar. 18 Breakfast at 9:30 am

Wednesdays:
 March 7, 14, 21 & 29
 Sr. Exercise Class at 9:00 am

St. John's Episcopal Church
 STAFF

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2018 OFFICERS

Nick Hamblin & Sharon Scott, *Senior Co-Wardens*
 Don Streeter, *Junior Warden*
 Sande Godbout & Mary Vellardita, *Co-Clerks*
 Erin Downey-Tarnowski, *Treasurer*

2018 VESTRY MEMBERS

Neil Barbu, Sue Daniel, Cindy Fowler and Julie Jones