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**Mini-Newsletter+ February 21, 2021 + 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent**

**Dear Friends,**

My apologies for the lapse in assembling and sending these newsletters! Hopefully I am now back on track with getting them to you weekly – They are meant to replace our printed weekly bulletins we use in Sunday worship when we are able to worship in person together.

Preparing Annual Reports and getting ready for Annual Meeting on January 24 side tracked me from writing these newsletters. If you still need a copy of the Annual Reports, please let me know. Many thanks to all of you who made it to our Zoom Annual Meeting. For those of you who couldn't join us: Rita MacAuslan was elected clerk and Bob Hughes was elected to serve at large. Rita, Bob and Jane Howard were elected delegates to Southern Convocation/Diocesan Convention – which meets via Zoom for the first time this year this Tuesday. The treasury report was received with thanks to all for continued support throughout the pandemic, with appreciation of the gift left to us by Melanie Munroe, and with thanks to Sue Gaillardetz, our treasurer, for pursuing the Payroll Protection Plan provided by the federal government. We ended 2020 with all our bills, including Fair Share, up to date. We passed a deficit budget for 2021 with hopes of further assistance through federal relief – at this writing, it is good to tell you that Sue is working again with our bank and we are eligible for this next round of PPP.

In my own remarks, I thanked particularly Nancy Jamrog-Couret along with our whole leadership team, and shared that to this point I had made a donation for the relief of musicians affected by loss of work in greater Boston. I added that in honor of the whole congregation's continued good will and sense of humor abiding through the year I had made a donation to Meals on Wheels of Vermont – Senator Bernie Sanders had chosen that charity to benefit from any efforts related to the use of his mittened "Cold Bernie" picture that was making the rounds.

Several curtesy resolutions followed. Of particular note is that our Senior Warden moved our appreciation to Bob Hughes for his considerable efforts putting together our recorded services. Jane announced that there had been contributions to a gift for Bob amounting to \$600 and that others were welcome to add to the gift if they wanted by sending designated checks made out to our church to the post office box. There was a flurry of enthusiasm, and Bob said he was speechless.

**Please note that the Bishop's Committee meets this Friday evening at 7:00 pm via Zoom.**

## Thoughts as Lent Begins



I sat bolt upright watching *The Color Purple* and as I heard, “I think it pisses God off if you walk by the **color purple** in a field somewhere and don't notice it.” Here we are starting off the church’s season filled with the color purple. It will be too bad if we take little or no notice. It will be our loss if we have learned to hate it as a dark season only for self-flagellation or the sweat of spiritual exertion. For here is the season of lengthening daylight following the darkness of winter and the Epiphany guidance of a star by night. Here is the time to prepare for Baptism – for cleansing, like getting out of our limp, dirty clothes to pop in the shower. Here, too is the season of solidarity with those seeking restoration in the community of the faithful. Next month marks a year since we have worshipped in person, together, in the Wheeler Chapel: Do we not long for the restoration of our own faith community? This is the invitation from our *Book of Common Prayer* pp. 264 -265:

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, charity and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.

What will you do, what will you think and ask or long for this Lent? With whom do you seek solidarity? Here are two simple things I am doing: I am contemplating ordinary pennies since I remembered John LeSueur loving the reminder, “In God We Trust.” I am letting that reminder along with the making of community “E Pluribus Unum”, the boldness of “Liberty” and some of the other symbols on coins speak to me. The other thing I am doing is focusing on a phrase I learned from a t-shirt I found at Goodwill one year on my birthday, “AS IS.” I am remembering that I come before God AS IS, God comes before me AS IS, and I can lead my life AS IS. And I am asking what that really means.

What will you do? What will you pray, or contemplate? If you renounce something, what will it be? If you confirm something, what will that be? I invite you, therefore, to a Holy Lent – a season in solidarity with anyone who needs to wash, a season in solidarity with anyone who seeks the restoration of community. Please let me know if I can be helpful. Blessings to you and all whom you love.



**PRAYER LIST** – Please send updates to the prayer list or prayers you find helpful!

**In Our Prayers:** Please remember all who are coping with severe weather, particularly in our southern states. Pray for all who are injured, ill or infirm, including those dealing with COVID-19, and for Greg (Dawn MacKechnie’s friend), Adrian Pike, Beatrice Wright, Karen Brown, Karenina Armstrong, Rhonda, Santos Lara Sr., Kirsten Draba, Julia DiStefano, Denys Ruel, Marjorie Johnston, Steven Lassey, Elvira Lassey, Larry Carpenter, Alfred Panela, Jim & Margo Barbotsina, Rick Fiacco, Daniel Parada, Mark May, Stephanie Holdgate, Nancy and Mike Colombo, Valerie Neill, Bill Lambroukous, Margaret Makowski Saunders, Mark Carter & Family, Anne & Paul Makowski, Steve Blotcky and Rachel Osborne. We pray for: those who seek well-being for others, including Merrimack’s emergency personnel; all medical workers; and all “essential workers.” We also remember Bishop Hirschfeld and the Episcopal Church in NH; our Prison Ministries; the St. Petersburg Men’s Ensemble; the Turkish Cultural Center; 4 Directions Outreach; our Food Pantries; Wheeler Memorial Chapel Trustees; our AA groups; Congregation Betenu, Qodesh Family Church & all of Merrimack’s Faith Communities.

**Please also offer prayers in loving memory of Sydney Mirick**, seven-year-old cousin of Joel and Rita MacAuslan, who died at the end of January following a life-long illness with cancer.

**A Prayer During Pandemic by The Most Rev. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury**

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light; through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Take a look – Here are the lessons for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent.**

### **The Collect**

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives & reigns with you & the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **Genesis 9:8-17**

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the

earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

### Psalm 25:1-9



1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; \*

let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; \* let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.

3 Show me your ways, O LORD, \*and teach me your paths.

4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, \*

for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

5 Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, \*for they are from everlasting.

6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; \*

remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

7 Gracious and upright is the LORD; \*

therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

8 He guides the humble in doing right \*and teaches his way to the lowly.

9 All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness \*

to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

### 1 Peter 3:18-22

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you-- not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

### Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

As you Consider the Readings, Especially, Take a Look at –

- Associations with Lent as 40 days – Noah, Jesus in wilderness, etc.
- Connections to Lent as preparation for Baptism and Renewal of our Baptismal Covenant – Read the Gospel in view of ← → Baptismal Covenant/putting your whole trust in Christ, etc.
- **Genesis:** The post-flood restoration of trust in God; the covenant with rainbow as sign
- **Notice in the Collect & Gospel:** Jesus' trust in God vs. proposals & temptations of Satan
- **And don't miss Psalm 25:1 –**

**To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; \*  
let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

Consider –



**In Holy Baptism, every candidate is asked these questions –** How are we doing with our trust in our Lord? What are our needs for washing, refreshment and restoration? Does “AS IS” mean being dirty and smelly, or coming clean? Think about the journey toward Easter and the renewal of our Baptisms being like bathing!

***Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? I renounce them.***

***Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? I renounce them.***

***Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God? I renounce them.***

***Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior? I do.***

***Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? I do.***

***Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord? I do.***

