

# THE PARISH CONNECTION



**Tri-County Lutheran Parish  
Issued on March 17, 2021**

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

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## From Pastor Beth

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone that believes in Him may have eternal life. John 3:16

This beloved verse was in the gospel reading this past week. Many of us memorized it as children. What many of us don't remember is that it is part of the story of Nicodemus. Maybe you remember something of Nicodemus. He really wanted to meet Jesus, but Nicodemus was a Pharisee. So, under the cover of darkness, he arranged to meet Jesus. They had an interesting discussion about being born from above that includes the above verse. We are not told if Nicodemus understands after their discussion as the next section of the chapter switches to Jesus and the disciples.

This isn't the end of Nicodemus' story. We hear from him again in chapter 7. The Pharisees and chief priests had sent the temple police out to arrest Jesus. However, they come back without him. As they listened to Jesus teach and answer questions, they were amazed and refused to arrest him. The Pharisees were not happy, but Nicodemus makes a somewhat attempt to support Jesus. He questions why they have judged Jesus without a hearing.

One more time is Nicodemus mentioned in John. It is in chapter 19 after Jesus has died on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea takes Jesus' body down off the cross and Nicodemus shows up with spices to help. They wrap the body and place it in the tomb.

I write this because I picture Nicodemus as the typical evangelism story. We often question if we know enough to be able to tell people about Jesus. What happens if they ask a question I cannot answer? It makes us anxious. Well, you are not alone. Here we have Jesus telling Nicodemus about eternal life and it doesn't result in a dramatic life altering change. What does happen is a slow process of comprehension. Nicodemus gradually begins to understand and maybe he never fully understands. All we know is that at the end of Jesus' life, Nicodemus has enough respect and admiration for Jesus that he makes sure his body is properly cared for and buried.

This is how much of evangelism works. The seed is planted. Maybe we have the opportunity to see it sprout and grow, maybe we don't. Sometimes it is other people who see the fruit. Sometimes the seed needs to be replanted over and over again. The point is to keep planting. It's ok to not know the answer to every question. Just speak to your own experience - how faith in God has impacted your life. Then trust in the Holy Spirit to help that seed grow.

### **News and Information**

Please feel free to reach out to Pastor Sam ([\*\*whiteginger20@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:whiteginger20@gmail.com)) or Pastor Beth ([\*\*chellman4557@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:chellman4557@gmail.com)) should you have a pastoral care concern. If you would like to reach both pastors at the same time, please email [clergy@tclparish.org](mailto:clergy@tclparish.org).

- If you have a congregational concern, please contact your council president.
- If you have a parish concern, please contact TCLP board president Harry Avery ([\*\*harryavery@yahoo.com\*\*](mailto:harryavery@yahoo.com)).
- If you have a Human Resources concern, contact Phyllis Keeler at [poetphyl@gmail.com](mailto:poetphyl@gmail.com) or Jeannette Wilber at [tam20kfw@tclparish.org](mailto:tam20kfw@tclparish.org).

### **To Join Zoom Meeting via Telephone for Worship on March 14, 2021**

Use this Meeting ID: 252 943 5520

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,88996300296# US (New York)

Dial by your location:

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 889 9630 0296

## **Lenten worship --- Bible Study --- Book Study**

**Mondays:**        **Bible Study** 7 pm led by Pastor Beth

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2529435520>

**Tuesdays:**    **Bible Study**, 10 am led by Pastor Beth

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2529435520>

**Wednesdays:**    **Lenten worship** at 6 pm.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87802267557>

**Book Study** at 6:30 p.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7700997419>

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***This week's Zoom broadcast will be from St. Stephen's at 11 am  
with Vicar Carolyn Lawrence***

***Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89596686833>***

Worship service videos can be found on YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8kJUJTm\\_PrA-l1qlv8PJ-g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8kJUJTm_PrA-l1qlv8PJ-g)

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### **Social Media Sharing**

Hopefully, you now understand the difference between our Facebook group and page. So, let's look more closely at the page. These are the public things that we really want you to share such as our worship services, special events, and other public information.

Why is this an important step? Because that is how we get the word out! When you share a post from our page to your newsfeed, all your friends will be able to see it. And when each Facebook user in the whole parish does it, that's a lot of free advertising. Even if you are going to worship in-person,

*please still share the zoom worship information. We have been getting some visitors on zoom because of this. It can be a first step to getting people to join us in person.*

*If you have questions or need more technical help, please just ask. Let's make the most of this free tool so others will know we are here.*

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**The Parish Prayer Group** is meeting the first and third Tuesdays at 4PM via Zoom. If you would like to join, please contact Pastor Sam.

Also – Pastor Sam has been hearing some thoughts around to start **an all-parish Sunday School** (likely on Zoom, due to distance/Covid). To make this happen **we need volunteers to teach and lead**. Do you have a gift for teaching and like to work with kids? Please let Pastor Sam know so we can try to get something started!

If you need food, necessities, masks, or help of any kind, please reach out to one of us. We have plenty of resources available to us in our parish and we are excited to be God's hands and feet for each other!

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**Opportunity to Help!!!** Columbia County Meals on Wheels program is looking for volunteers. Most volunteers do one or two days a week. Most routes take about an hour to an hour and a half at the most. The volunteers do not enter the individual's home, they place the meal on a table or chair outside the door, knock, back up 6 feet and wait for the individual to answer the door. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer should contact Amy Anderson, Nutrition Program Coordinator @ 518-672-5323.

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**Pr. Sam's MMC (Mutual Ministry Committee)**

Do you have any comments, questions, or constructive critiques concerning Pr. Sam? Perhaps you really enjoyed the way she did something, or perhaps you have a suggestion. Your feedback is very much desired and appreciated. You may either contact her directly, or if you wish to remain anonymous you may contact the MMC using this email distribution list: [mmcps@tclparish.org](mailto:mmcps@tclparish.org), which will automatically send an email to the entire team (except Pr. Sam.)

OR you may contact individual members:

Anne Philipp [annie2919@gmail.com](mailto:annie2919@gmail.com) (C) 518-610-1335

Karen Schubert [4schubertkara4@gmail.com](mailto:4schubertkara4@gmail.com) (H) 518-731-1190

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**A Note from your Parish Admin, Sharon Smith**

Send me your prayer additions, questions, Parish Connection updates, and anything else you may need to ask me to [parishadmin@tclparish.org](mailto:parishadmin@tclparish.org). Please submit for the bulletins and the Parish Connection as soon as possible, however by Monday, noon is preferred.

My hours are: 9 am - 3:45 pm. My lunch time is 1pm -2 pm and I will not be available during this time. You can, however, always leave a voicemail at: (518) 758-6526 or send an email to: [parishadmin@tclparish.org](mailto:parishadmin@tclparish.org)

Should I have to leave the office for any reason, I will leave a note as to when I will be back. Peace, Sharon

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**Book Study**

Book study continues! We are reading and discussing "Rising out of Hatred" by Eli Saslow. We meet every Wednesday at 6:30 pm on Zoom. If you are interested in attending, please use the following Zoom ID: 7700997419

## **Bible Study**

The Beatitudes have much to say about our lives as disciples of Christ. Beginning in Lent we will explore the Beatitudes in depth. I will be using the book "Blessed to Follow: The Beatitudes as a Compass for Discipleship" to guide us. While it isn't necessary to have the book, some of you may like it to follow along. Please let me know if you would like me to order one for you. They are also available on Amazon, but at a higher price than direct from the publisher in a bulk order.

Bible study will be on Monday evening at 7pm by zoom and on Tuesday morning at 10am using this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2529435520>  
Hope you can join us!

## **2021 TCLP Board**

Harry Avery	Chair	<a href="mailto:harryavery@tclparish.org">harryavery@tclparish.org</a>
Jackie Menagh	Vice-Chair	<a href="mailto:jamspirit@tclparish.org">jamspirit@tclparish.org</a>
Teresa Avery	Recorder	<a href="mailto:harryavery@yahoo.com">harryavery@yahoo.com</a>
Chuck Race	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:ctracejr@tclparish.org">ctracejr@tclparish.org</a>

# WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

## **HOLY WEEK**

4/1 (Maundy Thursday) - Pr. Sam Leading

Hudson 12:00pm (Noon)

Castleton 7:00pm (+Zoom streaming)

4/2 (Good Friday) - Pr. Beth Leading

Hudson 12:00pm (Noon)

East Schodack 7:00pm (+Zoom streaming)

4/3 (Easter Vigil) - Vr Care Leading

Valatie 6:30pm (inside and outside!)

### April 4 (Easter Sunday)

ESF & SLV - Pr. Sam

TC & SSES - Pr. Paul Rees-Rohrbacher

COE & ESJ - Pr. Beth

ZA & SPOH - Vr. Care

### May 2

ESF & SLV - Pr. Sam

TC & SSES - Pr. Paul Rees-Rohrbacher

COE & ESJ - Pr. Beth

ZA & SPOH - Vr. Care

### April 11

ESF & SLV - Vr. Care

TC & SSES - Pr. Sam

COE & ESJ - Pr. Dan Hahn

ZA & SPOH - Pr. Beth

### May 9

ESF SLV - Vr. Care

TC & SSES - SAM Duane Keeler

COE & ESJ - SAM Charles Senrick

ZA & SPOH - Pr. Beth

### April 18

ESF & SLV - Pr. Beth

TC & SSES - Vr. Care

COE & ESJ - Pr. Sam

ZA & SPOH - SAM Duane Keeler

### May 16

ESF & SLV - Pr. Beth

TC & SSES - Vr. Care

COE & ESJ - Pr. Sam

ZA & SPOH - SAM Charles Senrick

### April 25

ESF & SLV - SAM Charles Senrick

TC & SSES - Pr. Beth

COE & ESJ - Vr. Care

ZA & SPOH - Pr. Sam

### May 23 (Pentecost Sunday)

ESF & SLV - Pr. Sam

TC & SSES - Pr. Beth

COE & ESJ - Vr. Care

ZA & SPOH - Pr. John Knarvik

### May 30 (Holy Trinity Sunday)

ESF & SLV - Vr. Care

TC & SSES - Pr. Dan Hahn

COE & ESJ - SAM Duane Keeler

ZA & SPOH - Pr. Sam



# **Congregation Announcements**

***In-person worship has returned!***

***Check your congregation's announcements.***

## **EMANUEL, STUYVESANT FALLS**

**Contact – Leslie Dumont [lesliesd35@gmail.com](mailto:lesliesd35@gmail.com)**

**In-person worship 8:30 a.m.**

***2021 Calendars... Devotional Booklets... Offering Envelopes...oh, my!!***

***They're all here! Stop in and get yours!***

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Leslie Dumont	Term Expires 2023	President
Olivia Dumont	Term Expires 2022	Vice President
Linda Frick	Term Expires 2022	Co-Treasurer
*Dick Frick		Co-Treasurer
*Chuck Albertson		Secretary
Jennifer Dunn	Term Expires 2024	
Shirley McThenia	Term Expires 2024	
Pr. Sam	Ex Officio member	
Pr. Beth	Ex Officio member	

\* Non-elected council member

### **PARISH BOARD REPRESENTATIVES:**

Chair:	Harry Avery (Chair)
Primary:	Harry Avery
Alternate:	Chuck Albertson

## **Committees**

### **OUTREACH COMMITTEE (Joint committee with St. Luke's)**

Teresa Avery, Karen Albertson, Phyllis Keeler

### **WORSHIP COMMITTEE (Joint committee with St. Luke's)**

Phyllis Keeler

### **SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES TEAM (Parish Team)**

Karen Albertson

### **HUMAN RESOURCES (Parish Committee)**

Chair: Phyllis Keeler

### **MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE (Parish Committee)**

Will be from St. Luke's this year.

## **ST. LUKE'S, VALATIE**

Contact -- Karen McIntyre klym61@hotmail.com

**In-person worship 10:30 AM**

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2021**

Tim McGlaufflin	Mike Schunk	Janis McGlaufflin	Dana Berntson
Sharon Smith	Karen McIntyre	Gail Paone	Ted Fiebke

## **Council Officers**

Karen McIntyre -- President

Ken Schomaker -- Treasurer (not on council)

Sharon Smith – Secretary

Sharon Campbell is new financial secretary (not on council)

**TCLP Board Reps** – Tim McGlaufflin, Jon Strodl

**Readers during Worship**

- 3/21 Kara Udvary
- 3/28 Karen McIntyre
- 4/4 Sharon Smith
- 4/11 Dana Berntson
- 4/18 Larry Eleby
- 4/25 Brian Smith
- 5/2 Karen Lasher
- 5/9 Ethan Race
- 5/16 Beegee Roppolo
- 5/23 Kara Udvary
- 5/30 Sharon Smith

**EASTER FLOWERS!!**

**Orders due ASAP!!! Checks payable to St. Luke's.**

**Please specify type of flowers and who it's in memory/honor of.**

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>PRICE</b>
<b>5+ Bloom Lily</b>	<b>\$9.00</b>
<b>Tulips (5/6 Bulbs)</b>	<b>\$7.75</b>
<b>Hyacinth (3 Bulbs)</b>	<b>\$7.75</b>

## St. Luke's Council meeting 3/23 at 7 p.m.

*The 2021 offering envelopes...we still got 'em! Find them in the narthex when you come to worship!*

*St. Luke's 2021 Calendars...they're still here too! Also located in the narthex!*

*St. Luke's is selling tag sale items by appointment only. If interested, please contact Beegee Roppolo at 518-758-7045 or 518-320-6223; or Karen Lasher at 518-784-2032.*

### **EMANUEL/ST. JOHN'S**

Contact -- Richard Fitzgerald [rfatbellspond@yahoo.com](mailto:rfatbellspond@yahoo.com)

### **In-person worship 11 AM**

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Pat Brundage	President
Dick Fitzgerald	<u>Treasurer</u> (not a Council Member)
Debra Garrison	Secretary
Linda Baker	
Kirk Dixon	Sexton

**TCLP Board Reps** – Richard Fitzgerald, Joanne Lugert

# **ZION, ATHENS**

Contact -- Gethen Proper [gethen7@gmail.com](mailto:gethen7@gmail.com)

## **In-person worship 9 AM**

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

William Darling	President	518-943-4293
Tim Mercer	Vice President	518-859-1356
Bob O'Leary,	Treasurer	845-797-6084
<u>Gethen Proper</u>	Church & Financial Secretary	518-755-8395
<u>Carol Serazio</u>		518-731-9050
Karen Schubert		518-731-1190
<u>John Wais</u>		518-719-5754
John Van Valkenburg		518-945-1184

***Financial Secretary needed!*** Please see Bill, Gethen or anyone on the Council.

**TCLP Board Reps:** Tim Mercer, Bob O'Leary

**The many outreach projects of Zion** are made possible in large part by grants from Thrivent Financial. Every Thrivent member is eligible to apply for 2 action team grants per year. These are easy to apply for, and if you need help please ask Carrol Mercer Or Christine Wanek. If you are not a Thrivent member, but would still like to help apply for a grant, you can become a Thrivent Associate Member.

Associate Membership is \$19.95 and with that membership you are able to apply for a one-time Thrivent grant for \$250.00 for our congregation's outreach projects.

Contact Thrivent either by Phone at 845-849-1267, or at Thrivent.com.

**Five Loaves Project -- MEALS FOR THE HUNGRY AND THOSE IN NEED Thursday's @ 4:30 pm**

## **ST. PAUL'S, OAK HILL**

Contact – Jackie Menagh [jamspirit@hardsdisk.net](mailto:jamspirit@hardsdisk.net) 518-256 2496 (cell)

### **In-person worship 11 a.m.**

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Jackie Menagh	President	518-634-2026 home -- leave a message
(TBA)	Treasurer	
Sally Lord	Secretary	

#### **TCLP Board Rep – Jackie Menagh**

A Big Thank You to all those who have been sending their Offerings in by mail or dropping them off at the church. We really appreciate your faithfulness. The work of the Church and God continues and in this time of crisis, is more important than ever.

## **CHRIST OUR EMMANUEL, CHATHAM**

Contact – Jeanette Wilber [tam20kfw@aol.com](mailto:tam20kfw@aol.com)

### **In-person worship 9:30 a.m.**

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Jeanette Wilber	President
Kurt Hoelter	Vice President
Heidi Brennan	Recording and Corresponding Secretary
Cate MacPherson	
Richard Mac Donald (Mac)	
Henry Bartel	
Patty Bervy	

**TCLP Board Reps – Jeanette Wilber, Patty Bervy**

*Did you know there is a new way to send your offering? We have an online donation portal! Please visit our website at [www.chathamLutheran.org](http://www.chathamLutheran.org) to get started!*

**ST. STEPHENS, E. SCHODACK**

**Contact – Charles Mayrer 518-479-3640 or [cjmay33@gmail.com](mailto:cjmay33@gmail.com)**

**In-person worship 11 a.m.**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Charles Mayrer            President  
Brian Schell              Vice President  
Charles Senrick         Treasurer  
Cathy Teeter             Secretary  
Deborah Holtz, Diane Middleton.

**OUTREACH :** Alice Senrick [Asenrick29@gmail.com](mailto:Asenrick29@gmail.com)  
518-479-0819 or 518-852-1504 (not on council)

**TCLP Board Reps – Brian Schell, Charles Senrick**

St. Stephen's has a collection basket for non-perishable foods, that are given to the Anchor in Castleton, and Doors of Hope in Sand Lake, to help people in need.

**TRINITY, CASTLETON**

**Contact** – Anne Philipp [annie2919@gmail.com](mailto:annie2919@gmail.com) (C) 518-610-1335

Nicole Gardner [scullynik@yahoo.com](mailto:scullynik@yahoo.com) (H) 518-336-4077 (C) 518-312-8603

**In-person worship 9 a.m.**

## **Council Members**

Anne Philipp	President
Eric <u>Knodler</u>	Vice President
Elaine Dickson	Treasurer (not on Council)
Rik Cosgrave	Financial Secretary (not on Council)

## **TCLP Board Reps -- Anne Philipp, Nichole Gardner**

The Castleton Girl Scouts are still collecting bottles and cans and will continue to collect them until July of 2022. They can reach out to Nicole Gardner with questions or to make arrangements for pick up. She can be reached at 518-336-4077 (home) 518-312-8603 (text) or via email [scullynik@yahoo.com](mailto:scullynik@yahoo.com).

**Financial Secretary Needed** Wondering how you can help your church. A Financial Secretary is needed. Training is available. if interested please see Rik Cosgrave or anyone on the council.

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**What would you like to see in “The Parish Connection?” Drop a line to the TCLP office at [parishadmin@tclparish.org](mailto:parishadmin@tclparish.org)**

**Parish Administrator OFFICE HOURS:** 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. Lunch is from 1-2 pm Call any time!

If you have questions regarding the Tri County Lutheran Parish or for any other church issues or pastoral concerns, please call Sharon at 518-758-6526 or email her at: [parishadmin@tclparish.org](mailto:parishadmin@tclparish.org) and she can help direct you to the right person!

## **CONTACT US:**

Tri-County Lutheran Parish, PO Box 158, Valatie, NY 12184

Phone: (518) 758-6526

Pastor Samantha Perret (*Parish*) Phone – 518-229-4128

E-mail: [whiteginger20@gmail.com](mailto:whiteginger20@gmail.com)

Pastor Beth George (*Parish*) Phone – 717-364-4557

Email: [chellman4557@gmail.com](mailto:chellman4557@gmail.com)



Pastor Dan Hahn, (*Intern Supervisor*) Phone – 518-281-8127

E-mail --[pastordanhahn@gmail.com](mailto:pastordanhahn@gmail.com)

Vicar Carolyn Lawrence

E-Mail: [Carolyn.Lawrence@LSTC.edu](mailto:Carolyn.Lawrence@LSTC.edu)

TCLP Website: <https://www.tclparish.org>

CHATHAM WEBSITE: <https://www.chathamlutheran.org>

VALATIE/STUYVESANT FALLS PARISH WEBSITE: <https://www.slelc.com>

## **Devotions and Prayers for the Fifth Sunday in Lent- curated by Vicar Carolyn**

### **A Prayer attributed to St. Patrick**

May the Strength of God pilot us.

May the Power of God preserve us.

May the Wisdom of God instruct us.

May the Hand of God protect us.

May the Way of God direct us.

May the Shield of God defend us.

May the Host of God guard us

Against the snares of the evil ones,

Against temptations of the world.

May Christ be with us!

May Christ be before us!

May Christ be in us,

Christ be over all!

May Thy Salvation, Lord,  
Always be ours,  
This day, O Lord, and evermore. Amen.

### **Three Blessings by Philip Melanchthon**

*Along with Luther, Philip Melanchthon was one of the forefathers of our denomination. He was a passionate and zealous defender of Lutheran theology, and some of his writings are found in the Book of Concord today.*

Son of God,  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
crucified on a cross for us  
and raised up from the grave,  
to you we pray.  
Receive us into your eternal church  
and keep us always.  
With your Holy Spirit, guide us  
in the light of your Word.

The almighty God,  
Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,  
mercifully protect you,  
strengthen you,  
and guide you.

May the almighty God,  
Father of our Savior Jesus Christ,  
who through his gospel is gathering  
an eternal church among men and women,  
strengthen you in body and soul,  
and graciously keep and guide you,  
now and forever.

"The pale flowers of the dogwood outside this window are saints...the bass and trout hiding in the deep pools of the river are canonized by their beauty and their strength. The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and the sea too is a saint who praises God without interruption in her majestic dance." --**Thomas Merton**

## **A Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath by Common Prayer**

Lord of Creation,  
create in us a new rhythm of life  
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,  
of days that deliver rather than destroy,  
of time that tickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,  
by the rhythm of Your Truth, set us free  
from the bondage and baggage that breaks us,  
from the Pharaohs and fellows that fail us,  
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,  
may we be raised into the rhythm of Your new life,  
dead to deceitful calendars,  
dead to fleeting friend requests,  
dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, "Peace!"  
To our over-caffeinated consciences, say, "Cease!"  
To our suffocating selves, grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,  
we rest in you, our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,  
allow us to enter Your Sabbath-rest  
as your Sabbath-rest enters into us.  
In the name of our Creator,  
our Liberator,  
our Resurrection and Life,  
we pray.  
Amen.

"The gospel doesn't need a coalition devoted to keeping the wrong people out. It needs a family of sinners, saved by grace, committed to tearing down the walls, throwing open the doors, and shouting, 'Welcome! There's bread and wine. Come eat with us and talk. This isn't a kingdom for the worthy, but a kingdom for the hungry.'" --**Rachel Held Evans**

### **A Blessing by John O'Donohue**

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,  
May the clarity of light be yours,  
May the fluency of the ocean be yours,  
May the protection of the ancestors be yours.  
And so may a slow  
Wind work these words  
Of love around you,  
An invisible cloak  
To mind your life.

### **Sermon by Pastor Beth 3/14/21**

How many decisions do you make in a day? Think about all the conscious and unconscious things you decide to do. It is estimated that we make 34,000 decisions every day. Most of our decisions don't require a lot of thought, what to eat or when, smile or wave at someone across the room. We just do these things without thinking too much. We may put a bit more effort into bigger decisions such as stay with my present career or consider the fast-paced, rewarding world of ministry; stay

in New York or move some place with warmer weather year-round. But even the important decisions don't seem permanent. If we don't like our job, we will look for another. If we don't like where we live, we will move. Our decisions seem temporary. It's easy to forget that the choices we make have consequences.

Choice is built into our very existence. We cannot have it all. From the moment we are born, it is clear that there is more to see than we can see, more to do than we can ever do. We have more options than we can imagine.

Every time we choose a path, we miss countless others. Every decision is the death of all the other alternatives. It is difficult to admit that some directions are irreversible, that some decisions are permanent. It is painful to decide to do this when we know it means we will never be able to do that. It is easier to convince ourselves that all the paths end up converging, that it doesn't matter what anyone thinks or what they decide, that everything will turn out the same in the end. But that isn't true to our own life experience or our observations of others.

This story in the book of Numbers, this strange, scary, unsettling, unseemly, and slithering story is about decisions and their consequences. Moses is getting nothing but heartache from the Israelites. They are always whining. They have the gall to complain about being set free and describe captivity in Egypt as if it were the garden of Eden.

The people are dissatisfied. Their impatience turns to impertinence as they grumble about the wilderness, the lack of water and food, and the food that has been provided. I guess manna was like a bologna sandwich. It was never especially appealing and after years of the same thing, going hungry didn't seem so bad. At this point in the story what usually happened was that Moses would intercede with God, who would graciously meet the needs for food or water or security or whatever they wanted, but this time complaining about the menu prompts God to send poisonous serpents.

The snakes seem way, way, out of proportion to the crime to me. They were just grumbling about the food: manna yesterday, manna today, manna tomorrow. Who can really blame them? We all like a little variety.

According to Jewish teaching, the snakes are an ironic retribution. The rabbis explained that from creation, snakes have eaten only dust, and yet they have

done so without a word of complaint. Therefore, God has declared: “Let the serpent which does not complain about its food come and rule over these people complaining about theirs.” The snake is an object lesson teaching humility and patience. The problem with this is that it’s unlikely anyone would stop squirming long enough to figure it out. Snakes demand our full attention. We don’t stop and ask, “What helpful lesson can I learn from this experience?” when there is a poisonous snake in the room!

The Israelites, not surprisingly, scream for help. They have a change of heart. They confess their wrongdoing and beg Moses to beg God to get rid of the snakes. God is eager to help, but their prayers aren’t answered in exactly the way they had requested. The consequences of their actions don’t disappear. The danger remains and the people continue to suffer from the death dealing snakes.

God doesn’t remove the snakes, but rather commands Moses to make a bronze snake to put on a pole. Moses may have thought this was a strange request, but when you are up to your ankles in poisonous snakes, you don’t ask questions. The promise is that everyone who chooses to take a look will be fine. You will still get a snake bite, but you will live. It works like a charm. The snake on the pole, this distasteful sight lifted up, when people look at it, healing happens. The point is that when the people look to God, they find healing.

Even if you get rid of all the bizarre stuff - the manna, the poisonous serpents, and the snake on a stick - this story still sounds peculiar to us, because the difference between life and death is one decision.

The writer of the Gospel of John remembers this story and says that it is almost like that bronze snake when Christ is lifted up so that all can see the passionate love of God. The cross itself is strange, scary, unsettling, unseemly. The sight of the cross is so distasteful that it’s easy to miss the point. Christ’s death reveals the extent of God’s mercy for all of us who are snake-bit by the power of death. It’s not the cross that heals so much as it is the love behind the cross. These two strange stories, the snake and the cross, are both about God’s grace.

For Christians, Jesus is the defining revelation of God's love. That doesn’t mean that Christians believe that no one else knows God, but it does mean that in Jesus we best see God’s mercy. This verse we have known from childhood,

John 3:16, the one Martin Luther called the gospel in miniature, promises that God loves the whole world, not just those who gather on Sunday, not just the religiously inclined, not just those who have heard the name of Jesus, but the whole world. God comes in Christ to show the way of life in the midst of death, the way of peace in a violent world.

God has given us the wonderful, painful gift of choice. From the first choice we make in the morning until we choose to go to sleep at night, we are making the decisions that form our lives. We choose in the words we speak, the words we don't speak, the people we love, the people we don't even see, the thought we entertain, the ideas we hold, the deeds we do, and the deeds we leave undone. We choose to build up or tear down, to love or ignore, to heal or hurt, to bless or curse. We choose death or life. Christ chose death so that we could choose life. Look to Christ and see the possibilities. Look to the cross, see life abundant.

**Tri-County Lutheran Parish**  
**March 21, 2021, Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**Based on the ELW, Setting 1, with Communion**  
**Worship Leader: Vicar Carolyn Lawrence**  
**Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89596686833>**

**Announcements**

*(\*) stand, if able*

**Gathering Prayer / Silent Meditation / Musical Reflection**

**Call to Worship**

L: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Confession and Forgiveness**

L: Out of the depths we cry to God, in our suffering and in our pain. Out of the depths God cries to us, asking us to repent, to return to God with our whole hearts, to admit our sin, and to accept forgiveness. Amen.

So let us pray with one another, first in silence.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

L: Holy God, hear our prayer:

**C: For the mending of our hearts, torn apart by our unkindness.**

**For the healing of our souls, wasting away from the despair around us.**

**For the forgiveness we seek for the sin we have allowed to persist.**

**For the reconciliation of the world, whose division condemns us.**

**We pray for the courage to admit our fault,**

**The strength to amend our actions,**

**And the hope that your grace awaits us.**

**Through Christ we pray. Amen.**

L: Friends, hear this Good News: the love of the Triune God is beyond measure, and you are included in that love. Know that in the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven and thus freed to love and serve. **C: Amen.**



## **Greeting**

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And also with you.**

## **Prayer of the Day**

L: Let us pray.

**C: O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

R: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalms 119:9-16**

<sup>9</sup>How shall the young keep their way clean? By keeping to your word.

<sup>10</sup>**With my whole heart I seek you; let me not stray from your commandments.**

<sup>11</sup>I treasure your promise in my heart, that I may not sin against you.

<sup>12</sup>**Blessed are you, O LORD; instruct me in your statutes.**

<sup>13</sup>With my lips I recite all the judgments of your mouth.

<sup>14</sup>**I take greater delight in the way of your decrees than in all manner of riches.**

<sup>15</sup>I will meditate on your commandments and give attention to your ways.

<sup>16</sup>**My delight is in your statutes; I will not forget your word.**

### **Second Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10**

<sup>5</sup>Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;

<sup>6</sup>as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>7</sup>In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; <sup>9</sup>and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, <sup>10</sup>having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

R: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Acclamation**

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (*John 12:24*)

### **Gospel: John 12:20-33**

L: The Holy Gospel according to John, the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>20</sup>Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

<sup>27</sup>"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup>The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup>Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup>And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." <sup>33</sup>He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

L: The gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Sermon**

### **Prayer / Silent Meditation / Musical Reflection**

L: Let us proclaim our faith using the words of the Apostles Creed.

### **Apostles Creed**

**C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need. *A brief silence.*

You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Bless our Bishops, Synod Staff, Conference Deans, Pastors, Vicars, Seminarians, Church Musicians, Lay Leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder—with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all. We pray for military personnel John Schatzle, Matt White, Aldan Race, Daniel Main, and Angela Silliman. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve, especially Jo Ann Lowe, Douglas LeBrecht, Gena Davis, Barbara Slater, Bob S., Thomas Horan, Danny, Rob Gransfors, Dan Main, Mary and Frank, Frank Strantz, Sr., Maggie, Monique F, Hans Serazio, Vickie Achenbach, Grace, Etta, Son and family of Sue H., Bob and Rita Laffety, Bill McCumber, Carl Albertson, Michelle and Wally, Vincent Masa, Tari, Johnna, Tonya, Alicia, David and Family, Justin and Kim, Bridie G, Michelle, Lew Hotaling, Logan, Maria, Jodi, Emily, Sheila, Paula, Gloria LaCrosse, Bethany and family, Mary Ann, Paul & family; Sue Haverly, Lorene Bowes, Sue Erickson, Michael Bump, Leslie, Holly, Kayla, Katie M., Josefina Payne, Joy, Nadine Davis, Emma Burnett, Michelle Majercsik, Barbara Ritrovato, Carmel Micalizzi, Mary Keefes, Season Hubley, Judy Paine, Bunny Otterbeck, Catherine, Cindy D., Jackie Bachman, Pat Brundage, Claus Marzahl, Arlene Zahn, Al Zahn, Margot Petersen, Sheri Patterson, Kyle Stickles, Bonnie Walsh, Ivan Morales, Jacob Race, Linda Taliaferro, Grace Balint, Karen Mc Neff, Sara Scott-Fluentes, Debbie Hammond, Christi Wright, Frank Ball, Doris Hatfield, Angela & Jake; Doris Smith, Lynn LaFave, Joy H., Ed Schomaker, Pat Kingsbury, Kayte Ware, Karen Schubert, Jim Trimmer, Bill Duke, Matt White, Dorothy Teeter, Richard Springstead, Tom Sanford, Adeline Carr, Mary Ann Hipwell, Xavier Schmidt, Nancy Lansing, Bob Bedell, Kirt, Tonya, the Pfrommer family, Jack Lyons, Millie Sparks, Lisa Freeman, Billy Freeman, Patty Westover, Pastor Paul Rees-Rohrbacher, for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation, and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all those who are affected by COVID-19. We pray for those serving in the COVID-19 front lines...Allison White, Ted Fiebke, Amy Fiebke, Justine LaValley, Jason Vernon, and Jared Frick. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Hear our prayers, O Lord, whether we speak them aloud on our lips, or in the silence of our hearts. [Pause for prayers.] Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you (*especially Thomas Cranmer*). With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. We pray for the family and friends of Larry Glander & Tracy Jensen. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Peace**

L: I will give you all a moment to unmute yourselves... The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

### **Prayer / Silent Meditation / Musical Reflection**

### **Offering**

L: We offer prayers of thanksgiving and ask blessings on the offerings given for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

### **Offertory**

L: Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord,

**C: and fill to the brim our cup of blessing.**

L: Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown,

**C: that we may be fed with the bread of life.**

L: Gather the hopes and the dreams of all;

**C: unite them with the prayers we offer.**

L: Grace our table with your presence,

**C: and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.**

## **Dialogue**

L: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

## **Preface**

L: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## **Holy, Holy, Holy**

**C: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

## **Thanksgiving at the Table**

L: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

L: Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

## **Lord's Prayer**

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**\* Distribution of Communion**

**Post Communion Blessing**

L: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C: Amen**

**\* Prayer After Communion**

L: Let us pray.

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **C: Amen.**

**\* Blessing**

L: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **C: Amen.**

**Dismissal**

L: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

L: And all God's people say:

**C: Thanks be to God. Amen!**



## PEOPLE IN OUR PRAYERS

For the Bishops, Synod Staff, our Conference Dean Jo Page, Pastor Dan, Pastor Samantha, Pastor Beth, Vicar Carolyn Lawrence, Seminarians, and Lay Leaders.

For the families and friends of Larry Glander & Tracy Jensen.

We pray for all those who are affected by COVID-19 and especially for those serving in the COVID-19 front lines...Allison White, Ted Fiebke, Amy Fiebke, Justine Shultis LaValley, Jason Vernon, and Jared Frick.

For those serving in the military: John Schatzle, Matt White, Aldan Race, Daniel Main, and Angela Silliman.

For those in need of physical, mental, or spiritual healing: Jo Ann Lowe, Douglas LeBrecht, Gena Davis, Barbara Slater, Bob S., Thomas Horan, Danny, Rob Gransfors, Phyllis Keeler, Dan Main, Mary and Frank, Frank Strantz, Sr., Maggie, Monique F, Hans Serazio, Vickie Achenbach, Grace, Etta, Son and family of Sue H., Bob and Rita Laffety, Bill McCumber, Carl Albertson, Michelle and Wally, Vincent Masa, Tari, Johnna, Tonya, Alicia, David and Family, Justin and Kim, Bridie G, Michelle, Lew Hotaling, Logan, Maria, Jodi, Emily, Sheila, Paula, Gloria LaCrosse, Bethany and family, Mary AnnPaul & family; Sue Haverly, Lorene Bowes, Sue Erickson, Michael Bump, Leslie, Holly, Kayla, Katie M., Josefina Payne, Joy, Nadine Davis, Emma Burnett, Michelle Majercsik, Barbara Ritrovato, Burma Cavanagh, Carmel Micalizzi, Mary Keefes, Season Hubley, Judy Paine, Bunny Otterbeck, Catherine, Cindy D., Jackie Bachman, Pat Brundage, Claus Marzahl, Arlene Zahn, Al Zahn, Margot Petersen, Sheri Patterson, Kyle Stickles, Bonnie Walsh, Ivan Morales, Jacob Race, Linda Taliaferro, Grace Balint, Karen Mc Neff, Sara Scott-Fluentes, Debbie Hammond, Christi Wright, Frank Ball, Doris Hatfield, Angela & Jake; Doris Smith, Barbara Slater, Lynn LaFave, Joy H., Ed Schomaker, Pat Kingsbury, Kayte Ware, Karen Schubert, Jim Trimmer, Bill Duke, Matt White, Dorothy Teeter, Richard Springstead, Tom Sanford, Adeline Carr, Mary Ann Hipwell, Xavier Schmidt, Nancy Lansing, Bob Bedell, Kirt, Tonya, the Pfrommer family, Jack Lyons, Millie Sparks, Lisa Freeman, Billy Freeman, Patty Westover, Pastor Paul Rees-Rohrbacher, Richard Fitzgerald, their caregivers, and our parish members who due to COVID19 are unable to attend In-Person worship.