



Olive Tree Newsletter

January 2024

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unchanging love!
~Robert Robinson, "Come Thou Fount
of Every Blessing"



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Minister's Musings



Thomas Fedorka, LLM

Can you keep the messianic secret?

January begins our time after Epiphany. This year we get the Gospel of Mark as our primary text. Epiphany gets bookended with the baptism of our Lord on one end and the transfiguration on the other. These two events share some similar aspects.

When Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River, the voice of God declares that Jesus is God's beloved son. In the Gospel of Mark, the voice speaks only to Jesus. No one else hears God's voice from heaven. At the transfiguration, the voice speaks only to Peter, James, and John. Then after hearing the voice, Jesus instructs them to tell no one until after he has risen from the dead.

The messianic secret has always been confusing to me. Why would Jesus instruct demons and disciples alike to keep such a secret? I mean Jesus' identity as the Son of God is central to the gospel message.

I recently read about one way of looking at the messianic secret through the lens of the LGBTQIA community's metaphor of being "in the closet." The Gospel of Mark can be thought of as God in the closet. People who are referred to as being in the closet might be coming to terms with the real-world consequences of knowing the truth about themselves and speaking that truth. For many LGBTQIA persons all over the world, even in 2024, speaking this truth about yourself can get you killed. This was certainly true for Jesus and may be why Jesus resorts to the same tactics used by the LGBTQIA community to create a chosen family. Jesus comes out slowly to a few trusted friends creating a safe space for authentic self-expression. Then a few more are brought into the circle to build trust before sharing truth, and to choose the time and place of his "coming out" being fully revealed in the resurrection.

The church has done a terrible job of recognizing and proclaiming the belovedness of the LGBTQIA community. Let's not put our God into a small box that excludes any of God's people. We are all siblings in God's family and are called to Love all God's children, without limits and without boundaries.



a blessing for peace

FROM *HAVE A BEAUTIFUL, TERRIBLE DAY!*

God, we long for peace,
but we have already drawn our blades.
We are at war with each other,
and within ourselves.

Our world—the evidence of our folly—on full display.
We waste away in quarries dug by our own hands.

Oh, Jesus, come to us.
Come suddenly, into the center of our deepest need.
Come swiftly into the chaos of our conflict and distress.
Establish the peaceful order of your rule, not ours.
Your kingdom, not ours.
Reign with sovereignty in our hearts,
which refuse correction.
Reign with power over all that is ungovernable.
Reign with mercy over our communities, our
neighborhoods, and our nation.

Blessed are we who look to you, Jesus,
to be the change we cannot enact.
Come, prince of peace,
to our bleeding world.

@KATECBOWLER

Sharing about God and His Creation

Submitted by Jean Rolph

One of my husband Gary's favorite things to do is to watch Amazon Prime videos about nature and animals. Recovering from his second surgery he has had plenty of time to enjoy this sort of programming. I have come to appreciate the opportunities I have to join him viewing God's handiwork.

Each species appears to be genetically programmed to be and do what is necessary.

Watching small Wood Ducks jump out of a nesting hole high inside a tree minutes after birth, bounce as they hit the ground, and then waddle after their mother following her vocal encouragement is amazing.

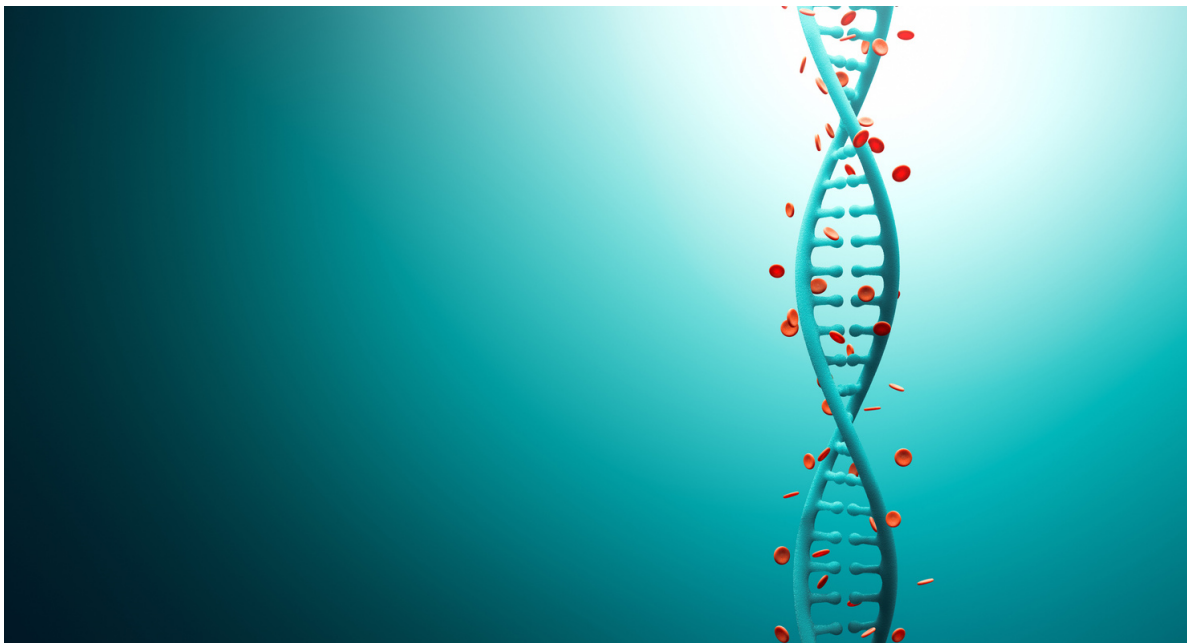
Just as wonderful is watching the gentle loving care animals and birds give to offspring born helpless and unable to fend for themselves. Flying or hunting hour after hour to give offspring the proper food. Sitting on nests in storms and blowing wind. Protecting their young by putting themselves at risk attempting to divert a predator. Using innate creativity to problem solve and learn in new situations and adapting to new environments.

If you know me you have probably heard me talk about DNA: of men and animals.

Humans are "related" in a way to all living things. We share many genes --you might call them the "building blocks of life", but the same genes may not work the same way --something yet to be understood. It is definitely a testament to both the creativity and economy of God. All humans are 98.8 % similar to other humans.

90% of our DNA with cats 60% with fruit flies 60% with bananas 80% with cows

My prayer for the New Year is that we will use the free will God gave each of us to show the love, dedication, and creative problem solving potential God put in each of us.



Prayer Service for Peace

Submitted by Diane Fortier

In response to all the unrest and violence around us, Gethsemane held another short evening prayer service on December 6. We gathered in the front of the church and sat at the foot of the cross, lit candles, prayed together, and sang together focusing our words and songs on peace. Everyone had the opportunity to kneel alone at the altar rail for quiet reflection, as the music and singing continued softly. We remembered the words in Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there" and were comforted knowing that Christ was with us and he heard us. I leave each of these services with a deep feeling of peace and unity and invite you to join us. Everyone is welcome to attend.

This prayer service is held the first Wednesday of each month at 6 pm. Everyone is welcome. The next one is on Wednesday, January 3, 2024.



Holiday Pictures



Angel Tree



Thank you to Monica Moquin for organizing this year's Angel Tree, and for everyone who gave gifts for children at the Families in Transition shelter.

Announcements

Email Address Change and Security Reminder:

The church office email address has changed to office@glcmanchester.org. Please add this new address to your “safe sender” list to avoid having messages from the church end up in your Spam folder. And, as always, please be cautious of emails or text messages appearing to be from Thomas or the church. We will never be contacting you to solicit money or gift cards.

Council and Congregational Announcements:

- Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be Sunday, January 28 after worship. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. Committee Heads are reminded to submit Annual Reports by January 14 so they can be distributed prior to the Annual Meeting.
- The council meeting minutes are printed each month and available at the top of the stairs, near the council. Please take a look, and don't be shy about asking your questions to council members.
- If you are interested in serving on church council, please let the office know.

ReachOut Updates

- We had a wonderful final community meal of 2023 in December. Thank you for everyone who came to volunteer!
- Thank you to the Redeemer Women's group from Lutheran Church of the Redeemer and to the Chakroborty family who collected and donated clothing and hygiene items for our unsheltered guests.
- We will be serving shepherd's pie for our meal on Sunday, January 21. Please let Crystal know if you are able to volunteer.



Sunday School Picture (circa 1990)

Submitted by Sue Capano



GLC Mortgage Update

Pr. Maria made a follow-up visit to GLC to answer any questions from her previous visit. Dane Hileman opened the meeting with a current financial summary.

24 pledges received for a total of \$107,000. This is less pledged than 2023. More people have increased their pledges for 2024. We also see a higher percentage of pledges based on current membership than last year. This is encouraging and a strong indicator that the congregation wishes to remain viable. We still do not have a clear vision of how to meet the balloon payment without selling the building.

Maria reviewed some viable options available to us and suggested that GLC discuss these in small group settings. These meetings are planned for January 14 & 21, prior to the Annual Meeting.

If we are unable to pay the mortgage or get an extension of it, our options seem to be:

1. Sell Building but keep Congregation intact elsewhere:
 - a. No change in congregation demographics/mission = Status Quo just in a new space in one of the following forms:
 - i. Rent Space from other congregation (different denomination, e.g., an Episcopal or other full communion denomination church)
 - ii. "Storefront-lease space in an empty store/business type of facility for worship and ministry
 - iii. Church without Walls ~ worship in homes, visible/inviting outdoor locations
2. Radical Redevelopment (work with Associate Kim Bergstrand, Director of Evangelical Mission)
 - a. Start over with new mission; must be fully funded by the congregation.
 - b. Possible only if there are no other ELCA congregations in local area
 - c. External mission focus on local community outreach
3. Holy Closure: Celebrate almost 150 years of ministry and close Congregation in an orderly way, directing its assets to other religious and charitable causes selected by the Congregation.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 Altar Guild - Bonnie 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	1 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS	2 7:00pm AA WB2B	3 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE 6:00pm Prayer Service for Peace	4	5 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	6 10:00am AA NO NAME
7 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	8 12:00pm MARY MARTHA 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS 7:30pm COMMUNICATIONS	9 7:00pm AA WB2B 7:00pm FINANCE	10 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE	11	12 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	13 10:00am AA NO NAME
14 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA Annual Reports Due	15 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS	16 7:00pm AA WB2B	17 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE	18 7:00pm COUNCIL	19 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	20 10:00am AA NO NAME
21  Community Meal 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 3:00pm COMMUNITY MEAL 6:00pm AA	22 5:00pm AA HHE 6:30pm REACHOUT 7:00pm AA MNWS	23 7:00pm AA WB2B	24 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE	25	26 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	27 10:00am AA NO NAME
28  ANNUAL MEETING 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Annual Congregational Meeting 6:00pm AA	29 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS	30 7:00pm AA WB2B	31 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE	1	2 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	3 10:00am AA NO NAME

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Gethsemane Lutheran Church

Free
Community
Meal

Sunday, January 21
3-4 PM



60 Penaccok Street | (603) 623-3451
Manchester, NH