



Olive Tree Newsletter

MARCH 2024

*Christ is Risen
Indeed.*



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Minister's Musings



What we think matters. What we say matters. Because what we think and say often impacts how we act. And what we think and say and how we act all greatly impacts how we see ourselves.

Sometimes we need to see ourselves differently in order to begin to think and act differently. We can decide who we want to be. We NEED to decide who we want to be. First, we need to understand and accept who we are now. Then knowing who we are now and who we want to become we can begin to focus on the actions necessary to get us there.

Do we want to be the neighbor Jesus describes in Luke 10:29–37 (the Good Samaritan)? Do we want to be Christ centered? Do we want to be a blessing in our community and in God's world?

I suspect that all of you answered "yes" to the questions above. Answering "yes" is the easy part. Deciding *how* we answer "yes" is the hard part as this will guide our actions.

Choose how YOU respond to the homeless situation in Manchester.

- View the homeless population as a safety threat.
- Look at the homeless with compassion and pity.
- Direct the homeless to possible community shelters and other resources.
- Work with community resources to bring food and shelter to the homeless.
- See the homeless as individual people in need of assistance.
- All/None of the above.
- Something else.

The same "quiz" can apply for any situation where someone is looking for assistance. Consider the above from an LGBTQIA+ perspective.

- LGBTQIA+ is just alphabet soup to me.
- I relate to some but not all of the letters.
- I fully support (even if I don't fully understand) my LGBTQIA+ siblings.
- Trans teens need Love and respect and the ability to get the help they need.
- I work with local, state, and national leaders to benefit my LGBTQIA+ siblings.
- Some of the above.
- Something else entirely.

How we think, what we say, and how we act matters.

Consider your personal response when someone asks *you personally* for help. Then reflect on how closely your actions mirror what Jesus taught us (John 13:34) and what Jesus did. Then reflect on how you think Gethsemane, as a Christ centered community, should act.

Jesus washed feet. Jesus served the poor. Jesus fed the hungry with real food as well as with the Word of God. Jesus sat and ate with sinners. Jesus Loved all of God's children and all of God's creation.

We can do anything, but we can't do everything, and we need to do something. Knowing who we want to be will help us to discern how and where we will act.

Consider individual prayer for personal discernment.

Consider small group prayer and small group discussions for community discernment.

Read subject matter books to form your opinions and get suggestions on possible actions.

Get active in the community and look with compassion into the eyes of those in need. When we take the time to see people instead of problems, we begin to see Christ in others (Matthew 25:40).

Holy Week

adapted from Sunday and Seasons

The Three Days of Holy Week; Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil are a real roller coaster ride of emotions covering the entire spectrum of the human experience.

Humanity, both Jesus' humanity and our own, is a central theme throughout The Three Days. Jesus shows us His humanity many times: from the way in which He washes His disciples' dirty feet to the way in which He instructs them on Love. Even the way He bleeds and dies is incredibly human of Him. While the story of Jesus' agonized prayer in the garden of Gethsemane isn't included in the texts for the Three Days (though it is present in this year's Palm/Passion reading), we can easily see Jesus' human side in His "moment of weakness"(or moment of humanness) when He asks God to "remove this cup from me" (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42), making one last plea to God to spare Him. Ultimately, we know how the story ends, and on Good Friday we hear Jesus say to Peter, "Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18:11).

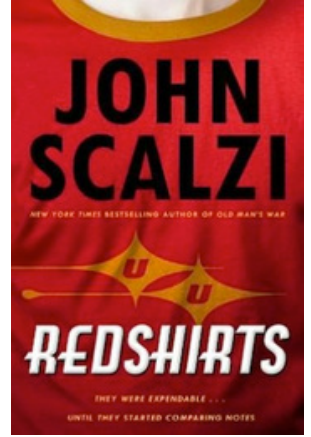
Jesus is once again filled with resolve to make the sacrifice that He knows is necessary. This sacrifice comes from a place of Love, and it is Love that is at the core of everything Jesus does throughout His life, especially in His last days. Therefore, it is no surprise that the commandment to the disciples is to "Love one another" (Maundy Thursday, John 13:34). Again, we experience Jesus pushing us out to the community. He does not instruct us to Love ourselves or to Love Him; the commandment is to Love one another as He Loves us. Take this Love, take this example, and spread it around the world. This is the last and most important lesson we get from our earthly Jesus, and it's worth remembering every year.

The Good Friday gospel from John almost reads like a John Grisham novel. It is filled with drama, courtroom testimonies, betrayal, and a conflicted prosecutor. Pilate plays such an interesting role in John's version of events, almost becoming a protagonist as he struggles with why these people who Loved Jesus just days before now want to put Him to death. The political pressures and links to the Greco-Roman context of the first century are certainly worth investigating in order to fully understand not just Pilate's mindset but also the political meaning behind the title given to Jesus: "King of the Jews." This title poses a direct challenge to the power and influence of Caesar. And yet, Pilate seems almost willing to overlook that challenge to the emperor's power and pushes for Jesus' release over that of Barabbas, described by John as a bandit but in other gospels as a violent revolutionary. Combine all of this with Peter's internal and external struggles, the vacillating crowd and crooked leaders, and Jesus' bloody death, and there are countless images of humanity in all forms and of how we experience the same struggles and doubts in our time.

While life and death stand together on Good Friday, resurrected life begins to shine through during the Easter Vigil. As light begins to enter our darkened worship space, so too does the light of Jesus begin to shine from the tomb. While we focus on the resurrected Jesus, now fully revealed as divine, we do not have to shy away from the human experience of living out the gospel in our context. In both the Easter Vigil and the Easter Day gospels we see the emotions of the resurrection through the eyes of the female disciples. In John's account we encounter the desperation of Mary Magdalene that turns into relief and excitement upon recognizing the risen Jesus. In Mark's account we witness the understandable fear and confusion expressed by the women at the tomb as they hear the news of Jesus' rising. In both cases the good news was spread. What a joy it is to be able to carry on the task of spreading the gospel of Jesus and his Love!

Book Review

Submitted by Thomas Fedorka



Redshirts: a novel by John Scalzi

Imagine you're in the future. You have entered the service of the Universal Union and have been assigned to the flagship Intrepid. Life is dangerous especially for you, since you are a new crewmember wearing a Red Shirt. This is a clear poke at the original Star Trek series where actors wearing red shirts were routinely killed off during an Away Mission, just to move the plot along.

Now imagine this is your real life. You push to understand why and what you might do to stop it. After all, you want to lead a better life, and a long life.

A great deal of energy is expended to avoid these dangerous Away Missions. Then you stumble on information that completely transforms your understanding of what the starship Intrepid really is. It's so crazy only a few other crew members believe you and together you embark on a high-risk mission to save all of your lives.

The book is written as a comedy and has some very comedic elements especially for Star Trek fans. Some of the humor might fall flat for non-fans. I found some really tender and intriguing elements that kept me reading more than the humor.

Three "after stories" are offered that I think make the whole novel. You must read the novel first for the after stories to make sense, but that is not a chore. It's well written, funny, and touching.

Community Theater

Submitted by Mike Shaffer

Did you know that Lazarus was the only person in the Bible who Jesus called his friend? Have you ever wondered what that relationship was like and how they interacted with each other? If so then come and see the original play 'Lazarus' at Manchester Community Theater with our very own **Mike Shaffer** in a supporting role as the Pharisee. Show dates and times are 3/8 and 3/9 at 7:30PM, 3/10 at 2PM, 3/15 and 3/16 at 7:30PM, and 3/17 at 2PM. Tickets are \$20 can be obtained at manchestercommunitytheater.com. This show also has an option for online viewing.

Lenten Mid-Week Services

Join us Wednesday evenings at 7pm during LENT for a Holy Lament worship series. Each week we will consider what it means to sit with our grief rather than try to push it aside. We will discover that many faithful believers have wrestled with grief, sorrow, and questions for God about why the innocent suffer. We will find a God who can take our grief and disappointment and transform them into holy joy and renewed hope. We will learn, ultimately, that Jesus' death on the cross—the place to which the season of Lent leads us—is the reason we never mourn as those without hope.

The plan is to meet each Wednesday starting 2/21 at 7pm by ZOOM. Let the church office know if you'd like to attend and we will send you the link.



Lenten Bible Study from Synod

The New England Synod will be offering a Lenten Collaborative Bible Study from February 19 through March 21. For more information, please visit nelutherans.org or email mwhyte@nesynod.org

ENCOUNTERING GOD:
Moving Forward with a Changing Church

God has been acting in our lives from the very beginning, in pain and chaos, through wilderness and travel, on the Ark and in locked rooms, as we doubt and question, in redemption and on mountaintops, in the quiet stillness and desperate grief, as buildings have risen and as they've crumbled, through imprisonment and gnashing of teeth, as we celebrate elaborate feasts and as we break bread in simple settings.

Join us, the New England Synod, including congregations, members, lay leaders, clergy, the curious, and some of our ecumenical partners, in a collaborative bible study, as we explore encounters with God through the lens of a nonlinear model of change.

Each Monday during Lent, one of our facilitators will release a 3-5 minute video introduction of our theme. You can review and watch these videos independently or you can use them and the accompanying questions as part of a midweek worship service.

On the following Thursday evening, we'll hold a Zoom session from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Our facilitator for the week will engage those gathered on Zoom in exploring our encounters with God today. We'll spend time in conversation, sharing, and prayer.

On the second Sunday of Easter, there will be resources for a worship service as a culmination of our time together.

A Lenten Collaborative Bible Study
Five weeks starting Feb. 19th through March 21st

Week 1 - Genesis 8: The Flood Subsides
Rafaela Radtke, LLM Santuario/ Nuevo Amanecer, Synod Council
Exploring the realistic pain that acknowledges the difference between how things are and how they COULD be.

Week 2 - Ezekiel 37:1-14: The Valley of Dry Bones
Rev. Elizabeth Nees, Transition Consultant, Coach (PCC), Dean Boston Metro
Looking at possibility not as the answer to pain but instead as worthwhile learning opportunities that exist in the midst of, alongside, and perhaps, because of, painful realities.

Week 3 - Matthew 15:21-27: The Canaanite Woman's Faith
Rev. Dr. Richard Simpson, Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of Western MA
Rev. Jennifer Gregg, Missioner for Servant Leadership
Challenging old assumptions and thinking out of the box so that we can build relationships with people who want to participate in ways not currently defined by existing structures.

Week 4 - John 3: Nicodemus Visits Jesus
Cassandra Wilson, Synod Council, Member of Redeemer, Woburn, MA
Stepping into the unknown to learn new ways of thinking, being, and doing, by sitting within that chaos and holding space open for questioning and deep discernment.

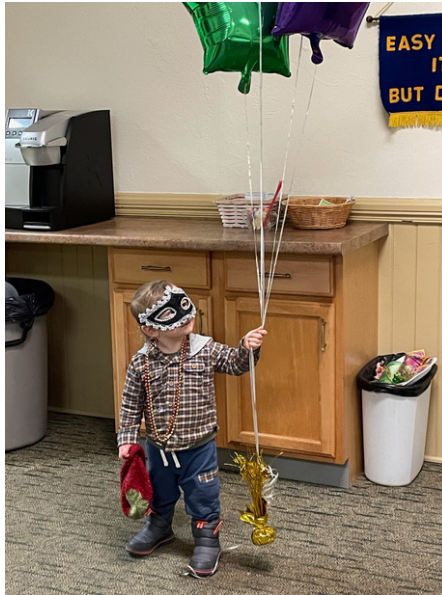
Week 5 - Luke 24: The Walk to Emmaus
Ryan Heckman, Christian Education Director, St. Matthew, Avon, CT
Moving toward testing, learning, re-ordering, and connecting new ideas and insights, to possibilities.

Inquiries and Zoom registration:
mwhyte@nesynod.org

Fellowship

March 8 we hosted a Mardi Gras celebration and pot luck.

Masks and beads were worn and a lot of wonderful food was shared.



Be sure you don't miss our next event, March 14 when we will celebrate Pi Day (3.14) and St. Patrick's Day. We'll gather at 5:30 and eat at 6pm. Bring a dish to share in honor of either (or both) of our themes.

Contact Mary Franck with questions.

GLC Women's Retreat

Ladies, retreat time is around the corner – May 17-19.

All ladies of Gethsemane, along with sisters, daughters, and friends, are invited to attend.

The cost this year is as follows: Double occupancy \$184, Single occupancy \$234

This covers all meals on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. No other charges.

More information is coming soon. Please join us, we have fellowship and a lot of fun. The deadline to sign up is April 15 th. Fees are due on arrival – cash, check or credit card. If any questions, contact Carol Burgess, Sarah Dorsch, or Judie Chary.

ReachOut Update

Submitted by Crystal Bluto

We have continued to provide free community meals to those in Manchester the third Sunday of every month. It is a project that has become near and dear to many people's hearts. We served Mac & Cheese at our February meal that the a big hit. It warms our hearts to be able to provide this service to our community, but we require more volunteers to keep the program going. We are especially in need of volunteers during the time from 2 pm to 4 pm, when we are packing and serving food. If you have never volunteered before and are unsure what it might be like, we would be happy to pair you with an experienced volunteer to show you the ropes. Please contact the church office or Crystal if you have any questions or an interest in volunteering. We would be very happy to have you join us!

Lent & Holy Week Schedule

Lenten Service via Zoom
Wednesday February 21, 28
March 6, 13, 20 7:00 PM

Palm Sunday Worship
Sunday, March 24
Passion Play in Parts @ 9:30

Maundy Thursday, March 28
Worship Service
With Foot Washing
7:00 PM

Good Friday, March 29
Tenebrae Service
7:00 PM

Easter Vigil
Saturday, March 30
7:00 PM

Lent in Brief, Part 2

Submitted by Hank Chary

Holy Week

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, continues for five weeks marked by the five numerated Sundays in Lent. After the fifth week of Lent we enter Holy Week which begins with the Sunday of the Passion (aka Palm Sunday), the sixth Sunday in Lent. We then have Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week, days which have never received much liturgical emphasis. Holy Week concludes with the Triduum (Latin for three days): Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The season of Lent ends liturgically at sundown on Holy Saturday with the climax of the Triduum: the Vigil of Easter.

Sunday of the Passion

Palm Sunday gets its name from the practice originating in the 4th century in Jerusalem of a procession with palms from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. The most famous account of this is by the nun Egeria (sometimes Etheria) who wrote about it in the 4th or early 5th century while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The palm branches are symbols of hope, life, and victory; and the hero's welcome afforded Jesus anticipates his impending victory over death.

The liturgical color for the Sunday of the Passion is scarlet (not red) and its use continues through Maundy Thursday. If scarlet is not available the purple of Lent is continued. Scarlet is the color of blood and also of triumph. The service usually begins with a procession with palms, ideally with the congregation gathering outside the sanctuary and then proceeding inside, sometimes marching around the church or even the block before entering the sanctuary. (Jesus' followers met him outside the city and accompanied him into it.) The procession with palms is a joyful entrance, but the mood of the service quickly changes as the appointed Gospel reading takes us to Golgotha.

The Triduum

The final three days of Lent comprise the Triduum: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (the Easter Vigil). The three sacred days of the Triduum constitute a single celebration which commemorates the central events of Christianity, essentially they comprise one elongated liturgy (service). These three days grew out of the early church's Great Easter Vigil and by the 4th century had been developed into what St. Augustine called "the most holy triduum of the crucified, buried, and risen Lord."

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday gets its name from the Latin *mandatum novum* or new commandment. The service for Maundy Thursday begins in an unusual way with the sermon, which concludes with an invitation to confession. There follows the absolution and the sharing of the peace. The absolution is traditionally omitted during Lent in deference to the "declaration of grace." ("You are forgiven..." in the declaration as opposed to "I therefore forgive you..." in the absolution.)

All this is done before the Holy Communion begins to close off the time of repentance, to conclude the season of penitence.

The emphasis in the Maundy Thursday service is on Christ's new commandment to love one another as He loves us. The "Instruction" (mandatum novum) either within the sermon or at its conclusion describes:

- Our struggles to love God and one another;
- God's gift of forgiveness;
- Our charge to serve others; and
- The Holy Communion as our intimate participation in God's love.

After the Gospel reading there may be a symbolic washing of the feet. The Holy Communion follows. After the Communion a hymn is sung during which the sacramental vessels are removed to the sacristy and the candles are extinguished. The altar is stripped while a cantor chants Psalm 22 (sometimes 88). The lights are dimmed. There is no benediction for the service is not really over. It continues into Good Friday and then on into the Easter Vigil. After the church is left in semidarkness, all depart in silence.

Good Friday

On Good Friday we gather to celebrate the Lord's sacrifice on the cross. In the Good Friday rite, all elaborations are stripped away. The minister(s) enter in silence. The service starts with the Prayer of the Day without a salutation or even "Let us pray". There is no Communion on Good Friday since that was done on Maundy Thursday; and, the triumphant joyous tone of the Eucharist is inappropriate as we reflect on the mystery of salvation and the crucified Christ. Good Friday is an austere time as we contemplate the Lord's passion and death. It is a time for the adoration of Christ, the sacrificial Lamb. The altar is bare and is not used. There is minimal or no music (a fast of the ears). Gifts (offerings) are received at the door and are not presented at the altar. The Gospel is St John's passion account the use of which was already a tradition by Egeria's pilgrimage in the 4th century.

The second part of the Good Friday liturgy consists of devotions before the cross and the adoration of the crucified. It starts with the "Bidding Prayer" instead of the "usual" prayers of intercession. In this prayer the assisting minister reads the bids: "Let us pray ...". This is followed by a period of silence for prayer, and then the presiding minister concludes with an appropriate collect.

If not in place against the altar when the service began, after the Bidding Prayer, a rough-hewn cross may be carried in procession into the church and placed in front of the altar. Silence is kept for meditation on the mystery of the crucified Savior: the mystery of redemption. There is no benediction as once more the service continues into the Easter Vigil. The ministers leave in silence. The congregation may stay for silent prayer and meditation.

The Vigil of Easter

The Vigil of Easter begins in complete darkness as if in death and despair, and ends in the brilliant light of the Resurrection. It is a repetition of actions and gestures initiated long ages before. In the celebration of this Vigil, space is transcended: the act of remembering takes place at a grave, but the grave is anywhere the event is recalled. The church building and with it the congregation moves from darkness to light, and in the font the baptized move from death to resurrection, boldly challenging the threatening powers of darkness and death. Time is transcended.

As noted earlier, the Easter Vigil was originally a preparation for and time for baptism and the center of the rite of the Easter Vigil remains the celebration of Holy Baptism, or if no candidates, for the renewal of baptismal promises. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (ca. 215) describes the ceremony which almost certainly was developed still earlier, probably even in New Testament times:

On Friday and Saturday the catechumens and others with them fasted;

Saturday night was a vigil of prayer and instruction;

Sunday morning, at cockcrow was the rite of Baptism, followed by the Eucharist.


In keeping the Easter Vigil the church follows Christ through his suffering and death to his resurrection and new life. The Vigil of Easter consists of four parts:

- Service of Light
- Service of Readings
- Service of Baptism
- Service of Holy Communion

At the end of the Easter Vigil, culminating in the Holy Communion, the Resurrection of the Lord is at hand. Lent is over. Easter is here! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed: Alleluia!!

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

March 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	26 5:00pm AA HHE 6:30pm REACHOUT 7:00pm AA MNWS	27 7:00pm AA WB2B	28 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm Mid-Week Lenten Service	29	1 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	2 10:00am AA NO NAME
3 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA  Community Meal	4 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS 7:30pm COMMUNICATIONS	5 7:00pm AA WB2B	6 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm Mid-Week Lenten Service	7	8 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	9 10:00am AA NO NAME
10 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	11 12:00pm MARY MARTHA 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS	12 7:00pm AA WB2B 7:00pm FINANCE	13 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm Mid-Week Lenten Service	14 5:30pm St. Patrick's Day/Pi Day Corned Beef Dinner	15 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	16 10:00am AA NO NAME
17 9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 3:00pm COMMUNITY MEAL 6:00pm AA	18 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS	19 7:00pm AA WB2B	20 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm Mid-Week Lenten Service	21 7:00pm COUNCIL	22 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE	23 10:00am AA NO NAME
24 9:30am PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	25 5:00pm AA HHE 6:30pm REACHOUT 7:00pm AA MNWS	26 7:00pm AA WB2B	27 12:00pm BIBLE STUDY 5:00pm AA HHE	28 7:00pm Maunday Thursday Worship Service	29 12:00pm AA WNBB 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm Good Friday Worship Service	30 10:00am AA NO NAME 7:00pm Easter Vigil
31 9:30am EASTER WORSHIP SERVICE 11:00am Christian Ed 6:00pm AA	1 5:00pm AA HHE 7:00pm AA MNWS 7:30pm COMMUNICATIONS	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



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