

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

September 2017

From Fr. John:

Christians seem to be increasingly fretful about why so many people leave church or are unchurched, especially those who call themselves “spiritual-but-not-religious.” Concerns are not unwarranted: a recent Pew Forum study showed that more than a quarter of American adults have left the faith of their childhood. Locally, more than 63 percent of us claim no religious affiliation, and yet more than 80 percent say they believe in something beyond the physical realm.

I’m admittedly biased, but I see “Book-of-Common-Prayer” Episcopalians as being uncommonly positioned to offer a deepening path for those who are “spiritual but imagine themselves to be not religious.” I don’t think they truly know who we are and what we offer. Research and my own anecdotal evidence suggests strongly that people who self-describe as “spiritual-but-not-religious” are looking for authentic, deep experiences.

Those who are even marginally drawn to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ may claim that they don’t want to attend church. What we offer is a subtle alternative. We invite people to be church. What’s more, the catechism and practices of the BCP provides permeable boundaries for conversations that delineate Episcopal experiences of Christ without precluding other faces of God.

Daily Office: The spiritually monastic character of these ancient practices set the daily rhythm like a heartbeat as the church moves through the liturgical seasons and holy days that bring the Christian story deeper into people’s lives. They can be easily prayed at home or at work as well as at church. The structure works more like cartilage than like bone, flexing and allowing for distinctions while still engaging with a community at prayer. Compline is a powerful addition and we are considering ways to teach it and practice it at St. Elizabeth so that people can participate here and carry the practice home.

Baptism: While Millennials and Gen X folk characteristically tend toward favoring individualism and independence, research also shows that what they deeply value is community and relationship. Many seek these through social media, which tend to provide bubbles of relationships of like-minded people, but baptism is a mature entry into a gorgeous, broken and breathtakingly authentic community with centuries of shared history, insights, and the gifts and limitations of genuine Christian relationship.

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The Holy Eucharist: The post-postmodern church joins the ancient church in the mystery of the Eucharist—the act that unites regardless of theologies or backgrounds. It is timeless mystery made manifest in the most authentic expression of God’s love imaginable. Our ancient forms of liturgy are genuinely authentic expressions of our Christian identity; unpretentious and unconcerned about accommodating every whim and fad.

What we offer is not geared to a specific demographic, but on a compellingly Christ-centered and eternity-focused theology. We provide a community of learning practitioners that transcend and include time, place and race. We offer a unifying historic rootedness in something far greater than any one of us. Consequently, the people gathered to celebrate the Mass give their hearts and loyalty to the realm of God instead of any political party or any nation, including the one we live in and love.

And because, as a friend of mine often says, “you can’t sell what you don’t have in the shop,” when I chant “Holy, holy, holy” in the Mass, I truly mean it and so do our maturing practitioners.

Confirmation: This sometimes maligned or neglected but crucial ritual recognizes those who have experienced God such that they are willing to take on the life-long work of wrestling like Jacob with the Angel, until YHWH gives them a new identity. Anglo-Catholic churches like St. Elizabeth are containers (whether an egg-shell or a crucible depends on the needs of the practitioner!) that spiritually developing people (that’s every single one of us!) needs as we move deeper into the mystery of the Gospel. We encourage and entertain questions that don’t have immediate answers, trusting that God will reveal new insights through the arts, through the sciences and through study, as well as through our prayer and worship. In this way, people grow increasingly capable of articulating what they stand for, rather than what they can’t stand.

Marriage: Those “religious-and-spiritual” monks and nuns who are genuinely called to celibacy have learned to give themselves in all their physicality into union with God. Imagine the insights gained by counseling all those who express their love physically to seek the face of God in the person they are joining in marriage and to feel the presence of Christ as the unity of marriage. Once again, the Episcopal way of being Christian in the world is well out ahead of the curve.

Reconciliation: There are unfortunate notions of “sin” that serve mainly to evoke a condemning, punishing God, making us reluctant to face the self-centeredness, violence and hatred in our own hearts. This, in turn, feeds a shadow that judges and shames others. The ritual of reconciliation (also known as “confession,” but note the difference in emphasis!) can be a prophylactic for judgmental stances, and can transform separation and fear into self-awareness, forgiveness and understanding.

For the sick and the dead: These ancient rituals and practices can foster the deeper healing of unity with God regardless of the physical outcome while remaining hopeful toward miraculous “cures.” Our rituals for burial can hold both the joy of resurrection and the pain of grief in a loving holding environment that promotes hope while recognizing harsh realities.

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This Old House of God....Building Update

The Parish Hall and kitchen continue to be posted on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) commercial leasing site. If you know anyone that is interested in leasing the space, please have them contact Tony Hettler.

Work in progress –

The north side building water heater (Zechariah, ambulatory, rest rooms, and nursery) and roof top ventilation fan need to be replaced. We have received bids for installation of a more cost efficient model and will be proceeding with the work in September.

We are finally finishing the cement sidewalk and asphalt work that is required because of the winter flooding/drainage work. We are working with contractors to get an estimate and schedule. Sections of the driveway and walkways will be closed off during the work.

A proposal to install lower cost LED lighting in sanctuary and narthex is being evaluated by Seattle City Light. If Seattle City Light agrees with the proposal they will pay for approximately 80% of the project costs and we will significantly lower our electric bill. Investment payback is less than one year. More to come on this topic!!

The plans for long-term maintenance of the building and grounds need to be addressed. If you have a desire to share your talents, please contact Carolyn Terry.

Linda Knutson

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The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

Street 1005 SW 152nd Street

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Mailing PO Box 66579

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Phone: (206) 243-6844

Email: info@stelizburien.comcastbiz.net

Website: www.stelizabethburien.org



Rector: Father John Forman

Sr. Warden: Sue Tierney

Jr. Warden: Carolyn Terry

Treasurer: Linda Knutson

Office Administrator: Christine Ramirez

Elizabethan Editor: Christine Ramirez

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Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, orientation or any affiliations, people genuinely seeking spiritual growth don't start coming or return to church because it is on trend. And no one leaves church because it isn't. People come to church if they truly encounter the Risen Christ there and an invitation to join in the ministry of Christ. They leave as those encounters fade. So that means as we continue to live more deeply into our identity as practitioners of a loving, ancient and Christ-centered church community, people will experience our joyful authenticity and be curious. What they decide to do next is between them and God, and that's a good thing!

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We have a new toilet in the women's bathroom downstairs near the Neighborhood House rooms. The old one was no longer attached to much of anything so needed replacing. A frozen faucet and a rusty leak under the sink were also repaired there.

Hugelkopf ?..... Bless you!

In October we will be creating a hugelkopf in the area next to the south side of the church nave. King County Conservation District will be assisting us in the task.

Hugelkultur is an old German gardening approach to creating a good growing area that absorbs and holds water, provides rich well drained soil for plants, and utilizes materials that would otherwise be sent off in the garden waste collection. (Hugelkopf means hill mound.)

We will be combining old wood, green clippings, fully aged compost and soil in a mound so that the winter rains can begin to transform the whole into a fertile garden area for raising food plants next spring. There will be pictures on the bulletin board of the process that I observed at a demonstration at Highline College in August. This allows us to avoid raising a bumper crop of weeds on poor soil next spring and also avoids importing large amounts of expensive soil for improved gardening. You'll be hearing more in the weeks to come and there will be opportunities for questions. Carolyn Terry

Hospitality House News

Hospitality House is a shelter for homeless women, a safe haven where those with nowhere to turn can find warm, dry shelter and healthy, nourishing food.

Each year we graduate approximately 80 women from a comprehensive 90-day program designed to help residents find employment, improve their life skills, and secure a safe, affordable place to call home.

Walk for the Women is September 16th this year.

The walk begins at Burien Towne Square Park at 10am. It is an easy 2-mile walk through the heart of downtown Burien and benefits the women at Hospitality House.

Registration starts at 9:30 am and is \$25.

If you can not participate but would like to help Hospitality House, please mail your check to:

Hospitality House

Attn: Walk for the Women

1419 SW 150th Street Burien, WA 98166

Just a reminder: It is St. Elizabeth's turn to provide meals during the week of September 26th through October 1st.

St. Elizabeth's Food Cupboard is well used and our neighbors that use it are grateful for it's availability. If you are inclined to contribute items here is a list of things that are needed:

Canned vegetables, soups, canned fruit, toilet paper, paper towels, toothpaste, cereal, peanut butter, bag beans, rice, condiments, any kind of canned meat, top ramen, mac & cheese and soap of any kind.



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PO Box 66579

Burien, Washington 98166-0579



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