

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

October 2018

From Fr. John: Pursuing a life of meaning

In September 1942, Nazis arrested the prominent Jewish psychiatrist Viktor Frankl in Vienna and took him and most of his family to a concentration camp. Three years later, when Auschwitz was finally liberated by Allied Forces, his parents and pregnant wife were dead. Frankl survived. One year later, he published *Man's Search for Meaning*, a book that told a part of his story and that also offered insights into ways to seek significance and purpose in our own lives, especially in the face of suffering.

More than 17 million copies of the book are still in print and in 1991, the Library of Congress listed it as one of the ten most influential books in the United States. In our current cultural climate, the book may seem entirely out of step. Its emphasis on meaning, the potential value hidden in suffering and the responsibility to something greater than the individual self run counter to a popular culture that often appears to be self-absorbed in the pursuit of individual happiness.

What Frankl learned from his own experience was that people who were able to discover or wring meaning out of even the most horrendous circumstances were far more resilient to suffering than those who did not. He noticed that everything can be taken from a person - their belongings, their relationships, their family and friends, even their lives - all except one thing, "the last of the human freedoms," Frankl wrote, "to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Chasing happiness is not the same as looking for meaning. A happy life and a meaningful life tend to overlap, and yet they are quite different. Research shows that hunting for happiness can actually make people *unhappy*. "Happiness," Frankl wrote, "cannot be pursued; it must ensue; One must have a reason to be happy." There is an emptiness gnawing at people that is showing up in our politics, in our media and in our relationships. In a culture obsessed with happiness, people are increasingly feeling hopeless, depressed and alone. Part of the reason is that happiness is temporary and is about feeling good in states of comfort or ease. Meaning, according to renowned psychologist Martin Seligman, comes from belonging to and serving something beyond yourself and from developing the best within you.

A recent study by the Center for Disease Control found that about two out of every five Americans have not found a satisfying life purpose. And what makes
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life meaningful may not necessarily make us happy. Meaningful life involves transcending the present moment and the self. "Being human," Frankl wrote, "always points, and is directed, to something or someone other than oneself - be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets [oneself] - by giving [oneself] to a cause to serve or another person to love - the more human [one] is."

So. How can we live more meaningful lives? Researcher Emily Esfahani Smith suggests that we can each create lives of meaning by building all or some of four essential pillars into our lives. You will no doubt see how these are made available at St. Elizabeth or any healthy church.

The first pillar is **belonging** - being in relationships where we are valued for who we naturally and truly are, and where we value others in the same way. Not for what we believe, how we vote or what we have, but who we are at the core. True belonging springs from love. It lives or dies in moments among people and so we can choose to cultivate belonging with others.

The second pillar is **purpose**. This is less about what you want and more about what you give. As Frankl pointed out, those who know the "why" for their existence are able to bear almost any "how." Purpose involves using the gifts God has given us to serve others. Purpose can involve our work, our families, artistic expression or civic activity. Purpose gives us something to live for, some "why" that compels us to act on behalf of a need that is beyond us as individuals - to live a life of discipleship. The purpose of St. Elizabeth as a church, for example, is to restore people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

The third pillar involves about getting outside ourselves in a different way: **transcendence**. Transcendent states are those rare moments when we are lifted out of our daily life, where our sense of isolated self fades into a connection with a higher reality. They can come in forms of private prayer or meditation, but there is a crucial link between our sacramental life and the life of discipleship to which we are sent after every Mass, to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord." Our shared liturgical life is what renews us for our Christian lives in the world, for our baptismal ministries - our apostolate.

The fourth pillar of meaning is **storytelling**, specifically, the stories we tell ourselves *about* ourselves. By crafting a story from the events of our lives, we find clarity and begin to understand how we became the people that we are. The greatest gift is in the realization that we each, with God's grace and help, are the primary actors and authors of our stories. We can change the way we're telling them, even in our suffering. Our lives are not just a sequence of random events entirely outside us. We can decide how we will respond to them. Always. We can reinterpret and retell our stories without ignoring or revising the objective facts. A good therapist can help, but so can a good listener or a journal, even if it takes months or years to mine the meaning out of our histories.

Happiness comes and goes. But when life is really good and when things are terrible, having meaning gives us something to hold on to. God bless each of you, all that you do and all your stories. Let us pray for each other!

New to our Library:

This country seems to be losing the ability for civil disagreement or making room for differing perspectives. The church can be a place for us to learn and nurture that skill. Here are a few books that may help that are new to our library:

Letters to my Palestinian Neighbor— Yossi Klein Halevi, a former New Yorker, tries reaching beyond the wall separating Israelis and Palestinians to describe the conflict through Israeli eyes.

This Side of Peace - There are more Arab-speaking Christians in the Middle East than there are Jews in the entire world. Author and Anglican Hannan Ashrawi is a legislator, activist and scholar who describes the Palestinian perspective on the conflict with Israel.

Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History – Professor and Protestant Rodney Stark offers historical facts that disprove, reframe or explain a number of the accusations leveled at the Roman Catholic Church over the centuries, without dismissing genuine problems.

Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say: Destroying Myths, Creating Love - My friend, Warren Farrell, is a staunch feminist who promotes “male-inclusive” versions of feminism that tend to irritate more radical activists. For those willing to listen, he has some excellent advice for maintaining healthy relationships.

The Essential Enneagram: The Definitive Personality Test and Self-Discovery Guide - Dr. David Daniels and Virginia Price, PhD, have created a brief but useful introduction to a centuries-old psychological system with roots in sacred tradition. It's a good way to start exploring differences in personalities and understanding your own preferences, and relationship and communications styles.

The Elizabethan

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.

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Fr. John Fergusson

Sr. Warden: Kirk Utley

Jr. Warden: Carolyn Terry

Treasurer: Linda Knutson

The BOO in Burien

Once again this year, St. Elizabeth will be participating in the Burien Boo, the annual "safe trick or treating" Halloween celebration on Saturday, October 27th from 12 noon to 4:00 p.m. (or until candy runs out!) We will be setting up a canopy on the corner of church property along SW 152nd and will be handing out candy, bottled water, cider and coffee. It's a great way for us to be good neighbors as one of the more prominent churches in the Olde Burien/Town Square area.

Last year was a fun afternoon watching children and their parents, many in costumes appreciating all the special treats!

Janey Montgomery is coordinating our efforts this year, and we encourage everyone in the parish to donate bags of candy, a gallon of apple cider or some small bottles water. Janey asks that we please bring our donations to the church office before Friday, October 26th, if possible by 12 noon.

We also need a few more volunteers to help work the event! Several people are already rolling up their sleeves, and we'll need help with set up from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and clean up from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sign-up sheet is posted on the church bulletin board. Please contact Janey Montgomery at coffee hour on Sundays, if you have any questions.

If you need a little additional incentive, Discover Burien is also providing hayrides, a children's costume contest, some scary story-telling, kids crafts, a haunted house, wiener dog races, a costume dog parade and, for adults, the Creepy Crawlers Pub Crawl, complete with an adult costume contest with a \$1,000 Grand Prize. The Pub Crawl staggers on from 6:00 p.m. to midnight. You can sign up at the Discover Burien website to reserve a spot, and they will e-mail you the names of the participating restaurants and bars as we get closer to the event.

Altar flowers: Our generous supply of donated flowers has dried up for now. Consequently, you will occasionally see envelopes on the pews for donations that the Altar Guild will use to buy the fresh-cut flowers that beautify our worship space. If you would like to donate flowers for a specific remembrance or event, please let us know and we will put a note in the bulletin.

You can also contact the office by calling 206.243.6844 or you can send a check with your request to P.O. Box 66579, Burien, Washington, 98166.

Adult Formation:

It is our tremendous good fortune to have our associate priest, the Reverend Canon John Ferguson, teaching Adult Formation classes. Fr. John recently launched a series of classes on the liturgical year. *The Church Year: Christian Identity & Culture* explores the cycle of the church year and its seasons. Classes are offered at 3:00 p.m. and again at 7:00 p.m. in the nave on each Tuesday of the series.

The next gatherings meetings will be on Tuesday, on October 16th and will be offered each Tuesday through November 13th.

In support of further exploration, there are a number of books in our library that may serve as useful complimentary resources to Fr. John's presentations. In addition to many others, here are some suggestions:

Welcome to the Church Year: An Introduction to the Seasons of the Episcopal Church by Vicki K. Black – an especially good introductory book for newcomers to the Episcopal tradition.

Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God by Bobby Gross – written by the director of Graduate and Faculty Ministries for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (he is relatively new to Anglicanism), Gross' book includes an introduction to the meaning of sacred time, thought provoking quotes and essays and personal devotions.

To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration by Gertrud Mueller Nelson – a mother, an artist, an author, a teacher, worshipping Lutheran and a Christian educator who has been an inspiration to many for decades emphasizes the importance of ceremonies in our lives.

The Christian Calendar: A Complete Guide to the Seasons of the Christian Year by Leonard W. Cowie – many beautiful illustrations accompany the historical text by a senior lecturer in history at both the University of London and the University of Surrey.

The Book of Occasional Services by Church Publishing is a supplement to our Book of Common Prayer. It contains special services of the church year like the service for All Hallows Eve, and pastoral services like Celebration of a Home.

Revised Common Lectionary: Episcopal Edition New Revised Standard Version 3 Year Cycle published by Saint Mark's Press - The RCL contains the collects, lessons and Psalms we hear and pray on Sundays and major Holy Days.



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“Power is explosive and tries to dominate by force. Strength simply holds fast to the truth, knowing that the truth will outlast the lie.”

~ **Fr. John Shea**

Coffee and conversation:

The next opportunity to come for an informal “get-to-know-you” chat will be on Friday, November 2nd. Come and chat over coffee and such from 10 a.m. to noon in the St John room. All are invited to come for a little light nosh and conversation.

We hope this can be a casual place for parishioners, interested friends and curious neighbors to get more acquainted with each other in small groups outside our worship together as a larger congregation. The next scheduled date December 7. Volunteers are signing up to make the coffee and bring treats.

If you are interested in hosting, Janey Montgomery has put up a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board across from the library. Please join us and bring a friend!