

# The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church    Burien, Washington

December 2018

## From Fr. John:

“The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” (from the Catechism, BCP, p. 855) As I mentioned in my letter to you at the beginning of pledge season, the national and international scene can feel overwhelmingly in turmoil. Fortunately, the church can offer some local movement toward reconciliation. We are one of the few organizations positioned to offer exactly the resources that can restore unity. I listed them in my letter to you, but I think it is worth a reminder that we keep St. Elizabeth thriving so that we can serve what people need.

*Fresh words:* We offer ways of talking with each other that convey truth that transcends and includes what is factual. Words that inspire action, shape how we understand ourselves, how we interpret the world around us and how we treat others.

*Generous listening:* In addition to silence and stillness, we can offer experiences of listening with curiosity, a willingness to be open to the humanity of the person speaking and hold them in the most generous light we can muster.

*Fearless civility:* We are a place for practice vulnerably interacting with people who think differently because they have different backgrounds and life experiences. Even when we disagree profoundly, there are higher intentions available here that keep us open to new creation, new possibilities.

*Graceful humility:* We can nurture trust that what we know is useful while maintaining a willingness to test our assumptions with curiosity. The practice of humility is not about putting oneself down, but about lifting others up.

*Hopeful patience:* We are all learning to practice of taking a long view and deciding whether being right is more important than being successful. Hopeful patience is the courageous trust that, together, we can act to make the world better.

*Boundaried hospitality:* More than an invitation, hospitality is the creation of a trustworthy atmosphere that shapes an experience of belonging and potential, as well as healthy boundaries, for possibilities as yet unrealized.

With God’s help, St. Elizabeth is positioned to offer Burien and the surrounding community these six essential practices. Your pledge makes this and much more possible. If you have not yet pledged, invite you to pray over the next couple of weeks and then join me in expressing our gratitude by pledging back to God some of the resources God has given each of us and all of us.

## Practicing gratefulness

Last month, we celebrated Thanksgiving. And as we move through Advent, we can cultivate an attitude that will lead to great joy: gratefulness. Practicing gratefulness is a spiritual exercise that aligns our hearts, minds and actions with the Creator. And it begins by practicing the search for God's presence and grace in creation. We change where we put our attention and energy. Whenever possible, we can begin or return to the practice of looking beyond ourselves for God's grace in creation. The daily practice of cultivating a grateful heart results in spiritual resilience for those times when genuine concern is warranted.

In daily life, gratitude begins as an emotional response focusing on what you have and expressing that emotion outwardly as thankfulness. We may express thanks in words, gestures, a gift, or a warm embrace. And, of course, we express our thankfulness in the Eucharist (a Greek word that means "thanksgiving.") The practice of giving thanks creates a whole host of positive emotional and physical benefits, from better sleep to reduced inflammation, lower blood pressure and a more fulfilled sense of well-being. Other emotions can stifle our gratitude, such as hostility, judgmentalism, selfishness, envy or apathy.

With practice, expressing gratitude can become a stable stance of gratefulness or what my friend and teacher Br. David Steindl-Rast calls "great-fullness." Gratefulness keeps our hearts open and humble, and can actually shift our mental functioning so that we make better decisions and engage in more positive conversations.

Here are a few tips that will support you begin or develop practices of gratefulness:

- In your morning prayers, include an intention to be appreciative. Ask God for the guidance and strength to find ways to be grateful regardless of anything else.
- During the day, watch yourself in interactions with other people. When you notice a negative response arising, catch it just for a beat and give yourself the option of finding something to be grateful for, even in your disappointment or anxiety. For example, we only complain about things we care about. So getting ready to complain is an opportunity to pause and remember what it is that we care so much about, even if it is somehow being prevented or frustrated.
- Advocate for focusing on what is working as well as what needs improvement. Find opportunities to speak appreciatively so that you are a source of emotional gratitude for other people: acknowledge a job well done or ask about what's going well. Look for ways to be an ally to people, not a rescuer; a supportive challenger rather than an oppressive blamer. Hold others in the most generous and positive light that you can summon to keep your heart open and non-judgmental.
- Just before you go to sleep, reflect on the day that has passed, searching for moments that stimulate gratitude. Offer thanks to God for at least three things in your nighttime prayers - three events, people or situations that you want to give God thanks for. No situation or event is too small to appreciate!

"Only gratefulness, in the form of openness for surprise," Br. David has said, "lays hold of the fullness of life in hope."

## Adult Formation in December

Have you ever wondered what the *Feast of the Visitation*, the *Feast of the Presentation*, *Holy Cross Day* or the *Feast of the Holy Name* were all about? Have you ever thought to yourself, “Why would I come out on a weeknight to observe something I’m not sure I understand?”

In the series of Adult Formation classes - *Principal Feasts & Major Holy Days* - our Associate Priest, Fr. John Fergusson, will lead an exploration of the events, people and meanings of these important days of the Church Year Calendar that we commemorate and celebrate.

At each class (as a free bonus), “Fergie’s Handy Handouts” will provide you with brief descriptions of the content of these and other principal feasts and major holy days to take home as a resource.

The first three class meetings of this series will be held on Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

There won’t be classes on Christmas Day or the Feast of the Holy Name (which the secular world calls New Years’ Day.)

The last class in this series will be held on Tuesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>. That class will explore Ascension Day, and the important gifts and meanings that the Ascension of Our Lord holds for us.

As usual, there will be a 3:00 pm and a 7:00 pm section of the class each Tuesday of the series.

All are invited! Come join us. It’ll be interesting, informative and fun!!

## 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.

### St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

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Fr. John Fergusson

**Sr. Warden:** Kirk Utley

**Jr. Warden:** Carolyn Terry

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## Hospitality House update and news

The meal coordinators for Hospitality House met on November 12<sup>th</sup> to organize meal donations for 2019. St. Elizabeth's congregation has been supporting the mission of Hospitality House since its beginning in 2000 and hopefully will be able to do so in the future.

The dates scheduled for St. Elizabeth to prepare and deliver meals are:

- January 22 - 27
- April 3 - 7
- July 3 - 7
- October 2- 6

A sign up sheet will be on the bulletin board soon. Please consider participating so that our generous support of Hospitality House can continue. If there are any questions about what participation requires, or the House and it's program, please call Danielle Butz ,206-243-3502 ,or you can go to [Hospitalityhousesouthking.org](http://Hospitalityhousesouthking.org) to learn more.

## Get involved!

Through worship and prayer, we encounter God's very self and we "respond to God, by thought and by deeds with or without words."

Eucharist: Mass on Sunday is the most important thing to participate in.

Daily Office: Consider coming to Evening Prayer on Wednesday evenings or to a Wednesday evening Mass in the last week of the month. Or talk to Fr. John about learning to say a simplified Daily Office at home on a regular basis.

Personal Prayer: Find a way to pray in whatever way works for you every day. You can also talk to Fr. John about establishing an intentional spiritual discipline.

**Altar flowers**: If you would like to donate flowers for the Christmas season, please watch for 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.

## Taking your next steps in faith:

Advent is the first season of the liturgical year. It comes around every December, right after Christ the King and just before the Christmas season. It can feel like we are just going around and around in a circle, like a snake eating its tail or like an endlessly turning wheel. But for Episcopalians, the liturgical year is slightly different. For us, as Benedictine monk Fr. Aiden Kavanaugh put it, “time is a sacrament.”

The timeless God uses created time to work out the plan of salvation, the purpose of creation, the *telos* of existence. We can think of it more like a spiral than as a closed circle. There’s no question that our earthly lives involve seasons that repeat. And yet, instead of remaining on one level forever and then dying, we see our lives moving on a spiral path getting ever close to God’s realm and God’s draws ever closer to us! Our spiritual lives develop as we move along the spiral of the liturgical year. The poet Wendell Berry wrote:

“Within the circles of our lives  
we dance the circle of our years.  
The circles of the seasons within the circles of the years.  
The cycles of the moon within the circles of the seasons.  
Within the cycles of the moon  
the circles of the reasons. Again, again, we come and go,  
changed, changing...”

There are very practical actions each of us can take along that path. The first, of course, is simply to be here with the congregation, worshipping at Sunday Mass as regularly as you can. At some point, you may decide to become more involved in our worship, in learning, in the parish or in action. If you have an idea for something you would like to try to make happen at St. Elizabeth, let Fr. John or a vestry member know!

If you are not yet baptized and chose to be, you can let Fr. John know so that we can begin the process. We all reaffirm our baptismal vows on the same days that are most appropriate for baptisms. The next baptismal feast day is the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. After that, the next opportunities are at the Easter Vigil on the evening of April 20<sup>th</sup>, the Day of Pentecost (June 9<sup>th</sup>), and finally All Saints' on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

If you want to be confirmed or received from another denomination into the Episcopal Church, let Fr. John know so that we can make appropriate arrangements. As mercenary as it may sound, your financial pledge is one of the most important ways of committing yourself to this parish as it represents not just your income, but all that you are and all that God has given you.

Whether you have been here for 20 years or 20 minutes, this is your church! Invest yourself as you move along the spiral of spiritual growth and find your ministry to give the world as an evolving practitioner of the faith you are a part of here at this church.

If you have questions or ideas, please contact Fr. John at [john\\_forman@comcast.net](mailto:john_forman@comcast.net), come by the office or call 206.715.7972.



# *The Elizabethan*

St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

“Feeling sorry, acknowledging guilt, and prolonging regret may be components of the human condition, but they are not what Jesus means by repentance. Repentance is the response to grace that overcomes the past and opens out to a new future. Repentance distinguishes Christian life as one of struggle and conversion and pervades it, not with remorse, but with hope. The message of Jesus is not ‘Repent,’ but ‘Repent for the Kingdom of God is near’.”

~ Fr. John Shea

## **Coffee and conversation:**

The next opportunity to come for an informal “get-to-know-you” chat will be on Friday, January 4<sup>th</sup>. Come and chat over coffee and such from 10 a.m. to noon in the St John room at St Elizabeth. Come and enjoy coffee, cookies 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. If you are interested in hosting one of these monthly events, Janey Montgomery has put up a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board across from the library. Please join us and bring a friend. All are welcome!