

# The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church    Burien, Washington

August 2019

## From Fr. John: Saying the Apostles' Creed with integrity

In the Episcopal church, the Apostles' creed is considered the ancient creed of Baptism, and as such, we recite it together at every Baptismal Feast day. In one point in those liturgies, the bishop or priest asks the congregation a series of questions to renew the Baptismal Covenant based on the creed. The first three questions begin with the phrase: "Do you believe..." and the expected responses all begin with the phrase: "I believe in..."

The words we use represent but are not the same as what is represented. Linguists make this distinction to remind us that the signifier (the word or phrase) is not the signified (that which the word or phrase points to). The map is not the territory. The Episcopal church also understands that people are likely to have different if not unique interpretations of the Creed. Consequently, each individual does well to work their own way through this ancient prayer, freighted with ancient signifiers, so that we can stand together and pray these words with integrity.

To some, the phrase "God the Father" refers an old man sitting on a throne somewhere in the sky. To others, that phrase evokes an invisible presence that they experience in church, often most intensely in the Eucharist. For still others, the same phrase means the eternal source of creation. None of these is completely wrong, and yet none of them exhaust the depth of meaning available. What feeds and inspires one person may not hold any significance for another.

Deeply aware that, at best, my own understanding is partial and revisable, this is what I believe when I stand with a congregation and answer those first three questions:

*"I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."* I "believe," that is to say, from the most expansive sense of Self that I can access, I put my unconditional trust in - I give my heart's deepest core to - God, not as one being among many beings, but as Being-Itself, Consciousness, the "birther" and the end-point of all that is. I am fed by the image of "Father" with the understanding that this particular image may be the most difficult for post-modern, first-world, economically and educationally privileged people to accept.

Without rejecting other images, I pray "Father" primarily because Jesus prayed "Abba." For me, as I imagine it may have for Jesus, the image implies a loving and  
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*("Creed" continued from page 1)*

Intimately familial relationship - a deep, essential belongingness to and inseparability with the ultimate source, ground and creative initiator of all manifest and unmanifest being ("heaven and earth"), whose love is all-powerful, all-encompassing.

*"I believe in Jesus Christ, [God's] only Son, our Lord."* I give my heart to Jesus the Anointed, that is, to that of God that I encounter in Jesus - the historical, uniquely individual, fully human person distinct from all other humans AND the fully-divine Awareness, Christ-consciousness - the imprint of the transcendent, prevenient sentience that pervades all Being that manifested uniquely in Jesus. I hold both in dynamic tension - in mystery rather than in certainty; firmly enough to trust and loosely enough to evolve.

To pray the rest of this phrase with integrity, I return to its Jewish context. To pray "his *only* Son," I recall the same phrase in Genesis 22, where YHWH refers to Isaac as Abraham's "only son," despite knowing of Ishmael, Abraham's son with Hagar. A better English translation is "uniquely beloved" child, which of course, includes all of us as YHWH also loves each of us uniquely, or as a rabbi acquaintance of mine is fond of saying: "No one here is extra."

In loving Jesus uniquely, YHWH draws our attention to the astonishing wonder of life itself and to the insight that many human parents know: that we cherish what we wait for and most risk losing. For me, to seek to love Jesus Christ as the only perfect image of the Father is to seek to emulate the way Jesus and his Abba love each other and all God's children uniquely and infinitely.

I see the reference to "our LORD" as a signifier for that which transcends and includes all apparent paradox in the fully human/fully divine Jesus the Christ. I continue to write the term in small caps to distinguish it from all other uses of "lord" as a reminder that it is a potentially misleading translation of the Hebrew "Adonai," the term used in Jewish prayer as a stand-in for the tetragrammaton, the four-letter "YHWH," used in place of the true but unpronounceable name of God that means both "I am that I am" and "I will be what I will be."

That way, the term becomes for me a reference to the transcendent awareness of the Divine, aware of itself but not separate from itself, and aware to varying degrees throughout all of the manifest and unmanifest realms. God made this consciousness uniquely available to, within and through Jesus Christ and it is that same awareness within which each of us may be seen as beautifully and infinitely loved and unique "ideas"; images, that is to say, within Consciousness-Itself, the essential awareness of Being-Itself.

*"I believe in the Holy Spirit."* The Holy, living Breath of God...we breathe it in and breathe it out—the infinite breath within our own finite breath. This is the third irreducible—that there is something rather than nothing; that there is consciousness, for even as I doubt that there is, I do so with awareness of my doubt; and that there is a stunning and awe-inspiring life-force.

I understand that life-force - that God-energy - to be Being-Itself inspiring images as though they were ideas arising in infinite Consciousness-Itself and loving them into finite beingness here on the relative plane, not severing them from the infinite,

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*("Creed" continued from page 2)*

but creating each self-conscious "idea" or conception, to be a nexus - a focal point as one more unique manifestation of God's love.

"Love-Itself" is my signifier for the life-force understood as the *Ruach-Elohim*, or "breath/spirit of God," the animating, dynamic and maintaining essence that imparts the Divine image and life-spark into every sentient being, and that is reflected in all creation.

It is the freely given love/power of YHWH breathed across the chaos of non-being and into the nostrils of all life. In this way, God's love and presence come closer to us than even our own breath, and consequently, we are most deeply alive and joyful when that love finds its way to expression—finite love given back to the infinite Source of all life and love like raindrops returned to the ocean.

Together with Being-Itself and Consciousness-Itself, it is that flow within, between and transcending us all that can be experienced, but not known; infinitely present, but still to come; beyond time, but incarnated throughout time; apprehended, but not comprehended.

And recognizing that my own sense of meaning contains some truth and is yet only partial at best, I can stand together with my brothers and sisters who have quite different interpretations - old man, creator of nature, unseen presence and still others - and we can pray these words together with joyful and grateful integrity.

## 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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**Rector:** Fr. John Forman

**Associate Priests:** Fr. Alwyn Hall

Fr. John Fergusson

**Sr. Warden:** Kirk Utley

**Co-Warden:** Ryan Davis

**Treasurer:** Linda Knutson

**Admin Assistant:** Celeste Alfred

## Adopt-a-project

Groundbreaking for the 19th post-WWII church to be built in the Diocese of Olympia began in 1955. The architects designing the new St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church won national recognition for the plans to build a mid-century version of a traditional basilica. The congregation had been a parochial mission of St. John's in West Seattle and organized as a separate congregation in 1944. They were self-supporting from 1952 to 1955 when construction. Where they had been meeting at a small chapel about a half mile west, the new building was designed to hold 400 people. The congregation grew and thrived.

Since that time, of course, the changed, rectors with varying strengths and weaknesses came and went, vestries changed as the building continued to age. She went through a period of decline and "deferred maintenance" caused by a number of contributing factors. And yet, there was a core group of people dedicated to finding ways to keep the doors open and the lights on, even as rainwater ran into the sanctuary. Most of those remarkable and imaginative people are still with us and some are now resting in the Columbarium.

Now, we need you! Over the past five years, the congregation started growing again. And again, resourceful people found ways to get the roof repaired, get the hallways refurbished, more energy efficient lighting installed, paving and asphalt repaired, storm drainage upgraded and landscaping improved. The vestry has been able to move from trying to deal with the disaster of the week to return to the kinds of on-going consideration that an aging building like our dear, beautiful St. Elizabeth. They have set priorities for the building that they will be tending: completing the replacement of water-damaged carpet in the chancel with Jerusalem limestone; completing the last of the roofing replacement (the section that doesn't leak...yet!) replacing the flooring in the library, sacristy and upstairs women's bathroom.

And you can help with some of the rest! The vestry maintains a list of projects that is not comprehensive because such a list for a building of a certain age is endless. It does vary, however, from things that will require funding that we don't currently have to things that require attention that vestry-members can't currently give.

But maybe you can! And here's how. There will be a list posted on one of the bulletin boards in the hallway that shows many of the tasks that the vestry is aware of. Take a look at it and if something catches your eye, take the lead on gathering information including bids on the cost. Contact the vestry to get a green-light and see if you can coordinate with other efforts.

That's what Barbara Zimmer did when she offered to clean up the sacristy, and enlisted Patti Davies, Ann Julian and Sue Kaas to clean and tidy, wash the walls and paint! And by coordinating with Janey Montegomery, we'll get a single bid for the flooring in three rooms! We have limited funds available, so you may need to use your own creativity to raise it. And then all funding, of course, needs to come under vestry review and should be run through the church to lower our Diocesan assessment. Stay in touch with the vestry as things progress and together, we'll bring this gorgeous church back to the splendor she deserves!

Talk to Kirk Utley, Ryan Davis, Fr. John or any vestry member if you have questions or ideas!

## Helping Hands within St. Elizabeth

One of our parishioners is in need of a few basic household items.

- Vacuum Cleaner
- Twin Cotton Sheets and pillowcases
- Standard Bed Pillows
- Mattress Pad
- Room Fan



If you have new or gently used items that you can donate, they would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Fr. John, Celeste Alfred or Linda Knutson and they will coordinate delivery of donations. Thank you!

## Walk for the Women

The annual “Walk for the Women” of Hospitality House will be held on Saturday, Aug. 17, starting at 9:30 a.m. at Burien Town Square Park. Tickets are \$25, and are available at <http://www.auctria.com/auction/HHWalk>. The funds raised during the walk will benefit Hospitality House, an ecumenical outreach ministry that has served more than 1,400 women experiencing homelessness since they began in 2000.

The 2-mile walk will raise money to help provide a warm bed, dry shelter and home-cooked meals for women from ages 18 to 80 who are served by a 90-day program designed to help them find work, improve their life skills and find a safe, affordable longer-term home. Come by the office or contact Danielle Butz to learn more about this exceptional and successful organization.

## Education for Ministry classes at St. Mark’s Cathedral

Registration is now open for 2019/20. Do you want to go deeper into your faith in an intense, ongoing way? Do you want to form lasting connections with others who also seek that connection? Consider registering for EfM at Saint Mark’s Cathedral.

EfM is a four-year program for lay people to study scripture, church history, and modern theology. Classes connect the material with church tradition, personal experiences, individual beliefs, and current events. Three different classes meet weekly September to June at Saint Mark’s: Sundays, 6:30–8:30 p.m.; Mondays, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.; or Mondays, 6:30–8:30 p.m. Each class is limited to 12 people; enrollment starts now and ends in early August or when classes are full. Tuition, including books, is \$375.

Please inquire by contacting The Rev. Cristi Chapman, [cchapman@saintmarks.org](mailto:cchapman@saintmarks.org), or class mentors: Sunday evening: Penelope Jackson, [pbjackson@mac.com](mailto:pbjackson@mac.com); Monday morning: Maria Coldwell, [mvcoldwell@hotmail.com](mailto:mvcoldwell@hotmail.com); Monday evening: Tom Hayton, [tomhayton@yahoo.com](mailto:tomhayton@yahoo.com).

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St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

“You are called to be truly human, but it is nothing short of the life of God within you that enables you to be so, to be remade in God's image. As C.S. Lewis said in a famous lecture, next to the sacrament itself your Christian neighbor is the holiest object ever presented to your sight, because in him or her the living Christ is truly present.”

~ **Bishop N. Thomas Wright**

## **What's your story?**

How did you come to find St. Elizabeth? From where? More importantly, what keeps you coming back? Please give some thought to writing a few paragraphs about your history and experience with St. Elizabeth. Write down your story and send it to Fr. John or let us know that you'd like some help and we'll provide an interviewer!