

# The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church    Burien, Washington

September 2019

## From Fr. John: The Holy Eucharist

The Mass, the Lord's Supper, is a central aspect of most Christian life. For Episcopalians, it is the defining practice. Most of us gather weekly on Sundays but there are other opportunities during the liturgical year to gather for the Holy Eucharist on a weekday. For example, on the last Wednesday of most months, we gather for an evening , spoken Mass that typically celebrates a saint or feast day.

The Eucharist is the pillar of our way of being Christian in the world, the primary practice of our religious expression. We experience the living God in action, unifying us in the Body of Christ where we can express the purpose for which God made us: to glorify, love and serve God.

While the Eucharist is an intrinsically healing ritual, that is not the primary purpose. The ritual can also be deeply comforting, though that is also not the primary purpose. Our hope is that people become familiar with the liturgical rhythms and gain new insights from each Eucharistic experience, yet even that is not the primary purpose. Wholeness, solace and learning are all secondary gifts, not to be dismissed.

The primary purpose of the liturgy of every Eucharist, whether spoken or chanted, is worship. It is an opening for the experience of awe, an encounter with the living, loving God in Word and Sacrament. We bring our brokenness and our wholeness to God. We offer our prosperity and our conflicts in gratitude. We lay our wisdom and our ignorance on God's altar where it is all consecrated and transfigured by God's inpouring life and returned to us to use to give life and love to other souls. In the routine of this repetitive experience, the church gathers and distributes the meaning and motivation for our mutual interdependence in the Body of Christ, rebinding us to God in the present, reuniting us with the Church of the past and rendering a foretaste of the heavenly banquet yet to come.

Consequently, we become more fully human and deeply aware of our spiritual selves by developing this dimension of our religious expression. I was assisting Fr. Thomas Keating, the brilliant Cistercian monk, at a workshop some years ago. Someone asked him why those of us on the Catholic side of the house are so "fussy" about liturgy and what we thought it did for us. He said, "Imagine discovering that your lover enjoyed Italian cuisine. Would you not take it upon yourself to learn how to cook Italian recipes to the very best of your ability? We don't do it for  
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ourselves, you see, at least not *only* for ourselves. We do it because we have come to trust that it pleases God somehow. We take it upon ourselves to do our best and give everything we can to the liturgy out of love and devotion to God."

With that in mind, here are some elements to consider in our own efforts to do the liturgy well:

Liturgical space: Because the Eucharist is our primary purpose, we work to keep our worship space timeless, uncluttered and beautiful. Beeswax candles and incense clean and scent the air with fragrances that anchor our experiences in our memories. We are replacing worn and mildewed carpet with Jerusalem limestone, and removing some rails to make the flow of our worship more graceful as we seek a balance between a certain timeless stability and an open flexibility.

Atmosphere: Some of you have heard me say that before people can find God everywhere, they have to find God somewhere. The sanctuary during the Mass is an intentional space, meaning that we try to create a place of beauty and reverence so that people can experience a taste of God's presence in a space that is solemn without being overly fastidious. We tailor the Eucharistic experience to engage the participation of spiritually mature Episcopalians while at the same time making space for those who are newer to the Episcopal way of being Christians or who are a bit more tentative in their experience.

That's the motivation behind our efforts to offer graceful liturgies that emphasize the mystery of the Mass without ignoring the experience of guests or newcomers. Ironically, churches that emphasize accommodation over the liturgy tend to create a cycle that is initially attractive to "church-shoppers" that leads to a loss of spiritual depth and identity. Conversely, as the congregation gains competence and confidence with the rhythms and patterns of the liturgy, newcomers and guests notice a dignified depth of meaningful worship. And rather than feeling like they are lost or somehow intruding, they find themselves drawn toward the mystery and invited to participate.

Reliable pattern: Recent years have seen a decline in traditional church membership and observance in the U.S., as well as a rise in non-denominational "mega-church" attendance and increasing numbers of people seeking what they call "spiritual experiences." Megachurches draw spectators looking for "spiritual entertainment" and they rely on the preaching of charismatic leaders whose theologies vary widely.

By contrast, Dr. Andrew Wilson of Lancaster University studied the affects of the cycle of seasonal prayers in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. His study concluded that church offering liturgies rich with music, vestments, art, movement, gestures and incense created conditions for profound mystical experiences. The consistency of the liturgical cycles - daily prayer, weekly Eucharist, seasons - and the texts associate with each of these serve to narrate the mystical experience and consequently take people into the kind of genuine spiritual depth that they can make their own and practice with increasing competence.

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## Costco members? Amazon shoppers?

Sandy Stonhouse is doing a marvelous job of shepherding our coffee hour. It's an opportunity to practice hospitality and, of course, we always need more hosts. The more volunteers we have, the less often each host needs to step up.

There is another way that everyone can help out even if they don't think they are up to hosting. Our kitchen routinely needs supplies to support our Sunday hospitality.

Last spring, Sandy and Celeste Alfred created an inventory that is posted on the bulletin board across from the library. And if you are a Costco or Amazon shopper, we could use your help in keeping our shelves stocked so that our hosts have what we need to offer coffee and a light nosh to our guests. Check with Celeste to see what may need. Typically, we go through the following:

- Paper cups (preferably with some recycled content)
- Lunch and dinner-size paper plates and bowls (preferably with some recycled content)
- Paper napkins (large and small)
- 13-gallon garbage bags (we share these with Neighborhood House)
- Cream and coffee creamer
- Dish detergent and sponges. (We handwash serving plates because Neighborhood House's machine is only for sanitizing.)

If we help our coffee hour hosts keep the cupboards in order, Celeste can keep an eye on our supplies so we know when we need something. And if we check in with her from time to time and are making a Costco run, we can lighten the load on our hosts.

And if you are an AmazonSmile shopper, with your account attached to St. Elizabeth, you can buy supplies and send a little financial kiss to the church as well!

Our coffee hour teams will appreciate the support. And please contact Sandy if you are ready to join a team or sign up for a Sunday!

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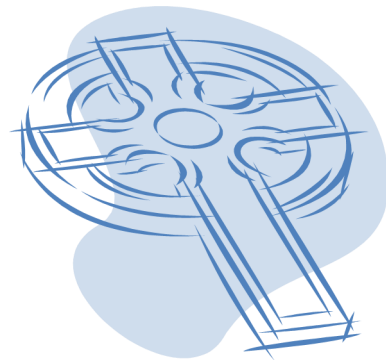
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**Rector:** Fr. John Forman

**Associate Priests:** Fr. Alwyn Hall

Fr. John Fergusson  
(emeritus)

**Sr. Warden:** Kirk Utley

**Co-Warden:** Ryan Davis

**Treasurer:** Linda Knutson

**Admin Assistant:** Celeste Alfred

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Integration: The Episcopal liturgy is not a public performance or a formulaic formality. The Mass, in particular, is a sacrament that transcends each individual and includes each of us in a shared collective experience that preserves each person's distinctiveness. That requires a certain aesthetic harmony in a live setting. The reliable pattern of each Mass makes room for subtle changes in details in the readings, in the musical settings and even in seasonal considerations. The consistency of ritual elements supports a sense of unity in diversity; physical, philosophical and social differences harmonized in solidarity rather than obliterated in uniformity. In short, we create together an experience of oneness with ourselves, with other people and with God.

The understandable impulse to make the liturgy easier for newcomers can unintentionally serve to starve the depth of experience through which God develops our spiritual maturity. Some parishes, for example, print the entire liturgy for the Mass in one booklet: readings, hymns, prayers and all. The desired intent is to allow the uninitiated to find all the elements of the ritual in one place. However, with the exception of those folks with hearing impairments who need to read, the inadvertent result is that people are no longer fully integrated. Instead of hearing the Word, which uses a different part of the brain, they read along looking at a page instead of at the reader.

Unchurched visitors looking for a spiritual experience can easily conclude that the gathering is for study or learning instead of worship. The fullest sense of participation that leads to increased competency and depth comes with a live, in-the-present awareness of the liturgical actions, the other individual people gathered and the felt sense of the sacred space in which God is embracing us. If we really want to make the liturgy easier for newcomers or visitors, we sit beside them and hand them prayer books and hymnals so that they get human interactions welcoming them into spiritual interactions.

Accommodation and inclusion: This requires a certain finite flexibility, practical judgment and a sense of proportion. Of course, we want to make the space as accessible as we can. The better part of hospitality involves keeping an eye on each other to see how we might be useful to those who may need a hand. We offer gluten-free hosts because there are people who need them without giving up the fresh-baked bread we use for liturgical reasons. We offer good wine because we understand the presence of Christ to be fully in the blessed bread alone and so those who must or choose to avoid alcohol can still participate as fully in the Eucharist as those who choose to sip the wine. We make allowances for those with reactions to incense and yet we still use it as a part of our ancient practices. (We do use the most hypoallergenic incense available.) We welcome children into the Mass and instead of over-emphasizing a child-friendly Eucharist, we have pew cards that guide families and those without children into a mutual respect for each other and the purpose of our gathering.

Inclusion is one of several values in our liturgy and we understand acceptance to be a mutual action. We welcome all people, though not all behaviors. We invite people to come and adopt our way of being Christian in the world while we look for ways to modify our ancient practices without losing the roots that nurture the depth of spiritual experience and the process of spiritual maturation that consistently results.



## Safe Church training

The Diocese of Olympia takes its responsibility for the safety of our people seriously. The Safe Church program teaches how to identify and prevent abuse within the church community, and is conducted several times per year, free of charge. The training consists of two sessions: Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People.

Safeguarding God's Children and People is required for all canonically resident and licensed clergy.

Safeguarding God's Children is also required for non-clergy who have a key to the church facility, vestry and bishop committee members, church staff, and anyone who works with children in any capacity. Safeguarding God's People is required for non-clergy who have a key to the church facility, vestry and bishop committee members, church staff, and eucharistic visitors.

The renewal training for Safeguarding God's Children and for Safeguarding God's People MAY be taken online if the original training was done after 2009.

If this is a first time training for either program, it is recommended that the training is taken in person. If one is not able to attend an in-person training (upcoming trainings are listed below), it is possible to take this online with the submission of a couple of survey questions added for compliance purposes.

Any other interested parishioners are encouraged to participate in training sessions. Certificates are valid for five years and then a renewal is required.

## Upcoming Events

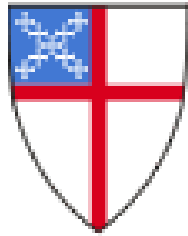
- Safeguarding God's Children, St. Andrew's in Seattle, **September 21 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon**. Focus is on identifying and preventing abuse of children in the church.
- Safeguarding God's People, St. Luke/San Lucas in Vancouver, **September 21 from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm**. Focus is on identifying and preventing abuse of vulnerable people in the church community.
- Safeguarding God's Children, St. Paul's in Bellingham, **September 25 from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm**
- Safeguarding God's Children, Epiphany in Seattle, **September 29 from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm**
- Safeguarding God's People, St. Luke/San Lucas in Vancouver, **October 5 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon**
- Safeguarding God's Children, St. Andrew's in Seattle, **October 12 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon**
- Safeguarding God's People, St. Thomas in Medina, **November 16 from 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm**

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St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

“It is in community that we are tested and purified. It is in community that we learn what forgiveness and healing are all about. It is in community that we learn who our neighbor is. Community is the true school of love.”

~ **Fr. Henri J. M. Nouwen**

## **Save the date:**

Please mark your calendars! On Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, at a special Coffee Hour, we will celebrate Pat Lofstedt's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday downstairs in the Parish Hall. Pass the word along and join us for church and for the celebration of our dear friend. Nothing would make her happier than to see a sanctuary full of friends and family. (Although the chocolate cake should bring a smile or two as well.) Bring a card for Pat and join us!