

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

October/November 2019

From Fr. John: Why we do what we do in Advent

The new liturgical year is coming in a few short weeks. On Sunday, November 24th, we will celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. That is also the last day of the liturgical year. The following Sunday is the first day of the new liturgical year, when we will start using Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary that focuses on the Gospel of Matthew. That Sunday, as always, is also the first Sunday of Advent, which warrants a little explanation!

Advent is the first season of the liturgical year for Episcopalians, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Moravians, Presbyterians and Methodists, as well as those who use the Western Rite in Orthodox Church. Those of us in the Western church have four Sundays in Advent, and always finishes on Christmas Eve. If that falls on a Sunday, it is considered to be the fourth Sunday of Advent. For some Eastern Orthodox churches, Advent starts on November 15th. For those that celebrate Christmas on the 7th of January, Advent starts on November 28th.

The word "advent" comes from the Latin, "adventus," meaning "arrival," which is a translation of the Greek word "parousia" (Confused yet?). Whatever the word, we are referring to the Second Coming of Christ. Since the time of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Advent has anticipated the coming of Christ from three different perspectives: first, in the incarnation of the Word made Flesh in Bethlehem; secondly, in our hearts daily; and thirdly, in anticipation of Christ coming in glory.

We don't know precisely when Advent began as a stand-alone preparation season, though it was certainly in existence from about 480. The Council of Tours of 567 ordered monks to fast every day in the month of December until Christmas. Today, there are numerous private and church practices associated with Advent.

Some families keep an Advent calendar, light candles in an Advent wreath, and pray specific daily devotionals. Many Christians set up creche scenes and Christmas trees or other decorations. Moravians light Christingle candles. In pre-medieval and medieval northern England, there were early forms of Nativity scenes called "advent images" or "vessel cups." A box, often with a glass lid covered with a white napkin, contained dolls or puppets representing Mary and the baby Jesus. The box usually was decorated with ribbons and flowers, and sometimes apples. These were carried around from door to door, and it was thought to be very unlucky, if the family did not see the dolls before Christmas Eve!

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We will also decorate St. Elizabeth for Advent and make changes to the liturgy that are appropriate to the season. We will put up and decorate a small tree (that some call a "Chrismon" tree) decorated with lights, small icons and a number of Bunny Frisvold's hand-made ornaments along with other wreaths and hangings as part of the "greening" of the church.

We will change the altar vestments and the priests' vestments to the Marian blue set festooned with fleurs-de-lis, the lilies associated with Mary and, in France, with Joseph. The deep blue also represents hope and is associated with the ancient Sarum rite of the Anglican Church.

We will bring out our Advent wreath with four candles and bless it on the First Sunday of Advent with incense that will be used throughout Advent, Christmastide and all through Eastertide. (The specific incense will change with the seasons and then we'll set it aside again for Ordinary Time.) Our wreath is traditionally made of evergreen branches and is sometimes decorated with pine cones, holly or laurel.

The wreath is an ancient symbol signifying a crown of victory; the evergreens representing strength, life and hope, and the eternity of God. Holly recalls the crown of thorns resting on the head of Christ and the flames of candles represent the coming of the Light of Christ that shines in the darkness. We light one of the four candles each Sunday in Advent. Three are blue and one is pink. The center candle, the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve.

Each of the four candles represent a theme. The first is HOPE to remind us of our living hope through the resurrection of Christ. The second is PEACE to remind us that, as the First Letter to Peter says, "we will love life and see good days if we turn from evil and do good and if we seek peace,." The candle lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, also called the Gaudete Sunday (or Rose Sunday after the pink candle), represents JOY and is named "Gaudete," that means "Rejoice," after the opening word of the entrance antiphon traditionally chanted at the Mass. The fourth and last blue candle is LOVE as a reminder that we can love one another with a pure heart because we are children of the God who incarnated in the Christchild and who left us with the Holy Spirit so that we can live with hope, peace, joy, and love until Christ comes again.

We also change the liturgy during Advent. The theme of readings and teachings during Advent anticipate the coming of Christ into our hearts and lives, while commemorating events leading to the incarnation at Christmas. In the Mass, we set aside the *Gloria in excelsis* until the Nativity and chant the more solemn *Kyrie eleison* borrowed from our Orthodox sisters and brothers. The return of the angels' song at Christmas has an even more joyful effect. We also change the settings of the Sanctus, the *Angus Dei* and the Eucharistic Prayer. At Evening Prayer, we switch to the Magnificat and the *Regina caeli* in honor of Mary.

During the Middle Ages, Advent took on an overemphasis on penitence. We now celebrate the season as a more quiet, reflective time — a good time to take stock of ourselves, which makes making a confession with a priest quite appropriate. If you would like to partake of this ancient reconciling ritual, just let me know and we'll make an appointment. Advent blessings!

Did you know?

Famously, Chief Seattle saw the buying and selling of land as absurd. "...The Great Chief above who made the country made it for all..." he said during the Point Elliott Council in 1855.

But ironically, the lake that saw one of the most important events in Seattle's life is now sealed off from the public by private land — even though the lake itself is publicly owned.

According to Duwamish historian David Buerge, Lake Burien was likely where, as an adolescent, Seattle went on his vision quest. These quests were rites of passage for those in Seattle's tribe, and for many Native youth. For several days Seattle fasted, cleansed himself with fir bark, and dove into the center of the lake where the spirit lived. Then in a dream vision, he acquired the power of Thunder, which was said to give him his booming voice and commanding presence. These traits later helped him guide the direction of the city that now bears his name.

Now Lake Burien is surrounded entirely by private homes. As reported by *The Seattle Times*, though the lake itself is owned by the state, there is not a single point of public access, and the lake is nearly impossible to view from ground-level. Lakefront property owners have fought attempts to create public access to the lake. As a result, Burien's namesake lake is virtually invisible in the town, and few know its connection to a legendary figure in Northwest history.

Written by David Haldeman and first published in Spark: the Magazine of Humanities Washington, 2019 Issue 2

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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.

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Why I come to St. Elizabeth

By Sue Chamberlain

A friend brought me to St. Elizabeth for worship late August 2017. She thought I would like the priest, whom she knew. I was reluctant. I am a life-long church-goer, but had grown weary of my church experience and discouraged at the thought of shopping for a new place. I had decided Sunday mornings at home with my husband and coffee, along with participating in a theological book group was as faithful as I could muster.

God had other plans.

I was delighted and dumbfounded by my first worship experience here. God was in the building, in the service and in the people. What a gift of wonder, faith, community and commitment lives here.

You welcomed me, included me, trusted me and walk in faith with me. God called to me through you. You long-time members have shown me the resilience of your faith. You newer members spark me with your faithful enthusiasm. And together, you have allowed me space to belong to this faith home.

You are a gem that sits on the corner of SW 10th and 152nd Ave. SW.

This old church

As you likely know, finances have been tight for St. Elizabeth this year. Even so, a number of people have stepped up and taken responsibility for a variety of projects ranging from improvements to critical maintenance. This ole building will always need TLC, and there is an "Adopt-a-Project" list on the bulletin board across the hall from the library is you are interested in seeing the vestry's priorities of if you are interested in one or more of the needs waiting for help.

The great news is that none of them are emergencies and here are some of the many that have been resolved:

- The sprinkler systems in front of the church have been repaired or replaced.
- The gardens all around the church have been vastly improved with pruning, weeding and new plants.
- The locking mechanism on the French door between the parking lot and the Parish Hall has been repaired.
- Failed drinking fountains in the upper and lower hallways have been decommissioned and the drywall repaired.
- The Columbarium garden fountain has been cleaned and repaired.
- Two toilets in the women's bathrooms have been replaced.
- The carpet in the library, the sacristy and the library has been replaced with beautiful laminate flooring that will be easier to keep clean.
- The sacristy and Altar Guild work areas have been cleaned out and painted.
- Several burned-out lights in the Parish Hall ceiling have been replaced.
- The outer barrel-face of the sanctuary has been caulked and painted, and the Celtic cross repainted.

Stay tuned! There is more to come! Thanks to all our volunteers!!!

Pledge month is underway

Differences of opinion can begin to feel insurmountable. And as we head toward Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas, and the family gatherings that so often come with them, our emotions can be tested sorely. It's one thing to feel compassion for people we agree with. Harder to find compassion for that uncle or cousin or "plus-one" dinner guest who holds vastly divergent perspectives and doesn't hesitate to share. We can feel painfully helpless when we see the sheer number of people experiencing homelessness, conflict and suffering.

Stanford professor and expert on the benefits of compassion Dr. Kelly McGonigal defines compassion as a "response to perceiving the suffering of another being with an urge to mitigate that suffering." Unlike empathy, the ability to sense what may be going on for someone else, compassion can take it further. Research shows that even compassionate prayer can make a difference in the lives of others. And St. Elizabeth is not only a place where people consistently discover compassion, it is a school for learning the practices of compassion in a community of the adequate!

We learn to talk with each other to convey truth while transcending and including what is factual. We hear words that inspire action, shape how we understand ourselves, how we interpret the world around us and how we treat others. And we engage in generous listening, which is more than simply not speaking. We learn to be present with curiosity, willing to be updated or surprised as we seek to understand the humanity of the person speaking and holding them in the most generous light we can muster.

This church is a place to practice vulnerably interacting with people who think differently because they have different backgrounds and life experiences. Even when we disagree profoundly, there must be some intention that keeps us open to new creation, new possibilities. We learn to trust that what we find useful while maintaining a willingness to test our assumptions with curiosity. We practice hopeful patience with each other. Not indecision or submissiveness, but taking a long view and deciding whether being right is more important than being successful. That results in the courageous trust that, together, we can act to make the world better.

The love that newcomers and guests feel at this church are more than a welcome. Our trademark hospitality is nurtured in a trustworthy atmosphere that shapes an experience of belonging and potential, as well as healthy boundaries, for possibilities as yet unrealized. God has graced St. Elizabeth with these abilities to offer our friends, neighbors and guests experiences of the love that God desires for them. That is our legacy and our vocation! If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

Your pledges, your presence and your prayers will keep this rare and beautiful gift available for generations to come. Please pray over the next couple of weeks and then join us when we collect and bless the pledge cards that express our gratitude to God for all that God has given each of us and all of us.



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“When we encounter active love, when we give it and receive it, the invisible and unique God, who dwells in inapproachable light, becomes ‘visible’ in the world – visible not to the physical eye, not even to the intellectual eye, but to the spiritual eye.”

~ **Miroslav Volf, founding Director of the Yale Center for Faith & Culture**

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!