



## ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Last week, I shared an exquisite reflection about converting loneliness into solitude from Fr. Henri Nouwen. This week, I invite you to consider what follows as a companion to that text, written at a completely different time and place. Without dismissing the importance maintaining a place set aside for gathering as community, and recognizing the insistence in loving-kindness for us to protect each other's health and safety, think of this as nourishment for the road ahead during our fast from the Eucharist. Let the ache in our hearts to be together again sharing the blessed sacrament inspire us to be open to the Spirit as she leads us to new ways to thrive as a community.

As if anticipating the reality of our situation today, Fr. Henri wrote 40 years ago: "We have to keep in mind that community, like solitude, is primarily a quality of the heart. While it remains true that we will never know what community is if we never come together in one place, community does not necessarily mean being physically together. We can well live in community while being physically alone. In such a situation, we can act freely, speak



honestly, and suffer patiently, because of the intimate bond of love that unites us with others even when time and place separate us from them. The community of love stretches out not only beyond the boundaries of countries and continents but also beyond the boundaries of decades and centuries. Not only the awareness of those who are far away but also the memory of those who lived long ago can lead us into a healing, sustaining, and guiding community. The space for God in community transcends all limits of time and place.

"Thus the discipline of community frees us to go wherever the Spirit guides us, even to places we would rather not go. This is the real Pentecost experience. When the Spirit descended on the disciples huddling together in fear, they were free to move out of their closed room into the world. As long as they were assembled in fear they did not yet form a community. But when they had received the Spirit, they became a body of free people who could stay in communion with each other even when they were as far apart from each other as Rome is from Jerusalem. Thus, when it is the Spirit of God and not fear that unites us in community, no distance of time or place can separate us."

God be with you until we meet again!

## Preparation

Now that we are in the late Spring/Summer season after Pentecost called “Ordinary time,” we use green as the liturgical color for altar and priestly vestments. The color symbolizes growth, creation, life, health and hope for many people from many faiths. At home, worship can take place anywhere but it is most appropriate at a table: a kitchen table, a dining table, a table in a garden or under a tree.



During this temporary physical separation, you might dress your worship space with photos or real flowers and greens. Anglican spirituality holds that all the senses can disclose God’s presence – not just texts for speaking or singing. You may want to burn some incense as a way to enhance your prayers and let them rise with the fragrant smoke. If you have a favorite icon, cross, rosary or image of Jesus, putting holy artifacts in your worship space can help focus your prayer. A candle is always appropriate, as is inviting friends, family or loved ones to join you by phone or through social media. You may want to invite loved ones that we no longer see or saints that you admire.

Liturgically appropriate music before or between readings or prayer also enhances home prayer life. Here is a soul-stirring version of “Bread of the world in mercy broken” sung by Australia’s Cantus Choro: [youtube.com/watch?v=8382PrTBOVY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=8382PrTBOVY) that captures the yearning for Eucharist and the ache we feel in this fast. For something a bit more majestic, try this: [youtube.com/watch?v=dpzF7QqoAmM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=dpzF7QqoAmM) The hymn, “How firm a foundation,” is followed by an introit as the priest incenses the altar of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Detroit. If you are feeling a bit world-weary, [youtube.com/watch?v=U40dKLf7b7c](https://youtube.com/watch?v=U40dKLf7b7c) is a little more intimate rendering of Hymn 669, “Commit thou all that grieves thee” recorded by pianist Andrew Remillard, who has been forced by life circumstances to re-learn how to play. You may also enjoy this recording of Hymn 448 “O love, how deep, how broad how high”: [youtube.com/watch?v=J9hW2k\\_VVtM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=J9hW2k_VVtM) sung beautifully and recently at the Church of the Nativity in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, while practicing appropriate social distancing.

We will do well to seek God’s inspiration as we also consider ways to act responsibly and creatively to the yearning that we share to be together because the church is a gathering of God’s children. We acknowledge that craving by supporting the church and each other as we can. And that includes praying in the plural – “we,” “us” and “our” – even when we are worshipping by ourselves or temporarily apart from each other physically. No matter what separates us – politically, geographically or economically – we are also always bound together in Christ.

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**5 July 2020**

**Centering**

*Make the sign of the cross as the leader says:* Blessed be God; (+) Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

*The leader prays:* Lord God of the nations,  
you have revealed your will to all people  
and promised us your saving help.  
May we hear and do what you command,  
that the darkness may be overcome  
by the power of your light;  
through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

**The Word of God for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

A reading from Genesis: [Abraham's servant said to Laban], "I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has grown great. He has given him sheep and cattle and silver and gold and male and female slaves and camels and donkeys. And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master after she had grown old, and he has given him all that he has. And my master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Caananite in whose land I dwell, but to my father's house you shall go and to my clan, and you shall take a wife for my son.'

"And today I came to the spring and I said, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, if You are going to grant success to the journey on which I come, here, I am poised by the spring of water, and let it be that the young woman who comes out to draw water to whom I say, "Let me drink a bit of water from your jug," and she says to me, "Drink, and for your camels, too, I shall draw water," she is the wife that the Lord has marked for my master's son.'

"I had barely finished speaking in my heart, and look, Rebekah was coming out, her jug on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water and I said to her, 'Pray, let me drink.' And she hurried and tipped down the jug that she carried and said, 'Drink, and your camels, too, I shall water,' and the camels, too, she watered. And I asked her, saying, 'Whose daughter are you?' and she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor whom Milcah bore him.' And I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, and I did obeisance and bowed to the LORD and blessed the LORD, God of my master Abraham Who guided me on the right way to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son. And so, if you are going to act with steadfast kindness toward my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn elsewhere."

And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will." And they sent off Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, become hence myriads teeming. May your seed take hold of the gates of its foes." And Rebekah rose, with her



young women, and they mounted the camels and went after the man, and the servant took Rebekah and went off. And Isaac had come from the approach to Beer-Lahai-Roi, as he was dwelling in the Negeb region. And Isaac went out to stroll in the field toward evening, and he raised his eyes and saw and, look, camels were coming. And Rebekah raised her eyes and saw Isaac, and she alighted from the camel. And she said to the servant, “Who is that man walking through the field toward us?” And the servant said, “He is my master,” and she took her veil and covered her face. And

the servant recounted to Isaac all the things he had done. And Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah as wife. And he loved her, and Isaac was consoled after his mother’s death.

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord

*Response:* Thanks be to God

(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 45:11-18

*A royal wedding song*

<sup>11</sup> Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:  
forget your own people and your father’s house.

<sup>12</sup> So the king will desire your beauty;  
he is your lord, pay homage to him.

<sup>13</sup> And the people of Tyre shall come with gifts,  
the richest of people shall seek your favor.

<sup>14</sup> The daughter of the king is clothed with splendor,  
Her robes embroidered with pearls set in gold.

<sup>15</sup> She is led to the king with her maiden companions.

<sup>16</sup> They are escorted amid gladness and joy;  
They pass within the palace of the king.

<sup>17</sup> Children shall be yours in place of your forebears;  
you will make them rulers over all the earth.

<sup>18</sup> May this song make your name forever remembered.  
May the peoples praise you from age to age.

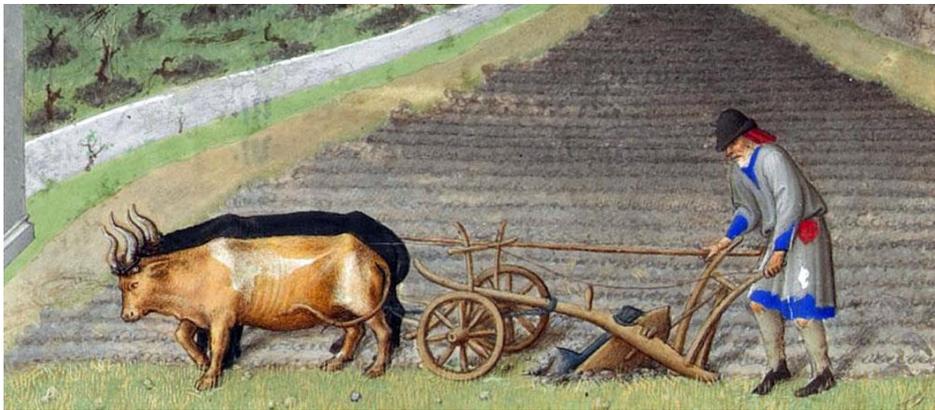
A reading from Romans: I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing

good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord

*Response:* Thanks be to God



*The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. Read the passage aloud without rushing. Allow the images to enter your awareness and find a home within.*

A reading from Matthew: [Jesus said to the crowd] “But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call to their fellows and say, ‘We piped for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!’ And wisdom is justified by her works.”

At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for so it was pleasing in your well-sight in your sight. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son, save the Father, nor does any know the Father, save the Son, [anyone] to whomsoever the Son wills to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord

*Response:* Thanks be to God

**Sermon:** On the Sundays following the Feast of the Trinity, we've been hearing stories about our ancient grandmothers and grandfathers in the faith. Our readings from Genesis have been teaching us about the earliest days of the covenant relationship between Abraham, his family and God.

We heard the promise made to Abraham and Sarah after they opened their home to three strangers. Then we heard the story of the banishment of Hagar and Ismael, Abraham's first son. Last week, we heard the dramatic story of Abraham offering his second son, Isaac, the heir apparent, as a burnt sacrifice. And today, we hear the story of how Abraham's son, Isaac, met Rebekah, who became his wife.

In all these stories, Abraham and his family are learning about how to be in right relationship with God and creation. And it is through the stories of the matriarchs and patriarchs of our faith that you and I and all of Abraham's descendants can learn how to be in right relationship.

Religious conflict is not new. New circumstances have made the consequences critical. A deadly storm of disease is raging at the same time as a movement of anti-racism that could become a cleansing fire. We, the children of Abraham, can be a force for good by tending to our deepest roots and honoring the covenant God made with our grandfather in the faith.

In the face of intolerance, hatred and violence, together, we can show how God inspires kindness, compassion and liberty. And by liberty, I don't mean the freedom to do whatever we feel like doing. I mean freedom informed by self-responsibility so that what is best in us, what is truly meaningful, can emerge.

People of faith, and specifically the descendants of Abraham, have a part to play. Rabbi Arik Ascherman pointed out that "for those of us who are painfully aware of the evils that our traditions have wrought, who believe that our traditions could and should be a force to make our world a better place, and for whom abandoning our particular religious tradition is not an option, the remaining possibility is to fight for the soul of our religion."

In times of crisis, we return to our roots to remember who we are. Our origin stories evolve over the course of time, mixing nostalgia with facts, interpretation with accuracy. And yet, whatever else we think about ancient marriage customs or parental authority or whether the stories of Abraham's family are historically accurate, surely, we can agree that these are deeply human stories. As one of my seminary professors, Fr. Paul, liked to say: "Our scripture is packed full of truth. And some of it happened!"

And there is deep truth in the simple story of Isaac and Rebekah. On the surface, it is a love story – the first detailed description of a marriage arrangement in the Torah. And yet, as Rabbi Arthur Green said about this chapter of Genesis: "If you are a person to whom God has granted a contemplative mind, and you want to enter God's service in an inward and wholehearted way, you will do as follows: In everything you see and hear, you see and hear only the divine presence that is 'garbed' there. You will take it as a clue to a deeper wisdom, awakening you to become attached to God... Thus you will be raising sparks, limbs of the [shining presence of God] that dwell within all and give life to all."

We can look past the love story on the surface and discover an even deeper love story about the qualities that God yearns to develop in us; qualities that are already deep in our natures as children of the Holy One.

As the story begins, God's promise to Sarah and Abraham appears to be at risk because Isaac, their only son, has no spouse. Abraham is beginning to fade in his old age and Sarah has died at the age of 127. And the expectation is that, as one generation dies, God's promise passes to the next generation.

That's why Isaac needs a wife. And so, Abraham sent his most faithful servant back to the city of Nachor, his hometown in Canaan, with an angel for guidance, a dowry and gifts to find Isaac an appropriate spouse. The servant knew that eligible young women gather at the well in the evening to draw water for their families. He waits with his camels for a woman who will give a specific response to his request for water. This would be the sign that he had found the right spouse for Isaac.

Similar scenes of meetings at wells that lead to promise and generativity will show up later in Scripture: Rachel and Jacob will meet at a well, and so will Zipporah and Moses. Much later, Photina, a Samaritan woman, will meet a descendant of Isaac's named Jesus.

Abraham's servant found a vessel in Rebekah through which God could show *hesed*, which we hear translated into English as "steadfast loving-kindness." The Hebrew conveys so much more. *Hesed* is God's loving-kindness expressed in action, a covenant love between God and God's children that spreads between God's children in ways that mutually and responsibly respect each other's dignity, freedom and integrity.

Jewish mystics say that *hesed* was a grace of God that Abraham first manifested in the world and throughout his lengthy life. And as Abraham came closer to the end of his time on earth, that quality began to dim. Some sages say that God had stopped speaking to Abraham. It was, after all, an angel rather than God who intervened to stop Abraham from killing Isaac.

And so there is something important in what the servant found in Rebekah. "If you are going to act," he says to her (through Laban), "with steadfast kindness [with *hesed*, that is] If you are going to act with *hesed* toward my master, tell me." She responds immediately by saying of her own free will that she will go – an echo of the response that Sarah and Abraham gave to God.

As Rebekah's story unfolds from that choice onward, God works through her as a new embodiment of *hesed* – a new receptacle of God's promise. A blessing is pronounced over her that she will be the mother of "myriads teeming," the same promise God made to Sarah.

That's us!

The promise that God made and the quality of *hesed* that brought into the world through Abraham and passed on through Rebekah is passed along to us. That's why we pray in one version of our Eucharistic prayers that God will grant that we may "find our inheritance with matriarchs and patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs."

This is the yoke that Matthew's Jesus invites his followers to take on and learn from. The quality of *hesed* passed on from our grandmothers and grandfathers in the faith must shine through us because that is what God's creation needs most from the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Mary and Joseph. God's promise comes to fulfillment in one moment for God and across myriad generations encountering multiple challenges for us.

At our best, the children of Abraham express our loving-kindness in action, so that it spreads in ways that mutually and responsibly respect each other's dignity, freedom and integrity. That's our part in fulfilling the promise that God keeps.

*That's who we are.*

*Silence and stillness*



## **The Nicene Creed**

*Leader:* Let us reaffirm our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he (or “she” or no pronoun) is worshiped and glorified.

He (she/who) has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

*These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:*

*Leader:* Through baptism we have been made alive in Christ Jesus. With the breath of the Holy Spirit speaking through our renewed lives, we pray for the whole state of Christ's church and the world, saying: "LORD, have mercy."

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the united Church of Pakistan, the Most Reverend Humphrey Peters, Bishop of Peshawar & Moderator of the Church of Pakistan. In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Huston Camp & Conference Center, Gold Bar; St. Andrew's House, Union; the Refugee Resettlement Office.

For the church, that we might be faithful, willing to serve, constant in grace, and receptive to newness, let us pray to the LORD.

*All:* LORD, have mercy.

*Leader:* We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders, and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list. Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

*Leader:* For this congregation, that we might be eager to welcome, diligent in prayer, and generous in deed, let us pray to the LORD.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For our nation, town and neighborhood, that we might be advocates for the excluded, diligent in prayer, defenders of liberty and models of justice.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For those who lament the iniquity of racism, those who protest the brutality of hateful speech and deadly action; for those working for racial justice and harmony, and for the courage to examine our own prejudices, inviting the Holy Spirit to free us from them.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For those experiencing homelessness, unemployment or under-employment, and those without healthcare or food stability.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For those who grieve, for those isolated in care facilities, those in prison, those suffering from addiction and those who are despondent.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For those in dangerous occupations, for those who care for the sick, those who work the land, those who work in transportation, warehouse or delivery services and those who teach.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*Leader:* For our families and all those placed in our care, for those with whom we disagree, and for those who are examples of grace in our lives.

*All:* LORD have mercy.

*A period of silence follows and then, leader:* Christ Jesus, our brother and our Savior, everlasting Son of the Father, through whose Holy Spirit we pray, you humbled yourself for our sake; help us to listen to your voice. Awaken in us the spirit of humble service and guide us as we reach out to others in love. Reconcile us all as children of the Holy One, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our souls, our minds and our bodies. *Amen.*

*Leader:* Let us confess our sins to God.

*Silence may be kept and then all together:*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father:

We have sinned against you,  
through our own fault,  
in thought, and word, and deed,  
and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,  
forgive us all our offenses; and grant that we may serve you  
in newness of life,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

*Leader:* May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*



### **Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer**

*Please feel free to use the translation and language that most feeds your heart.*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Prayer of spiritual communion**

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to be separated from you. *Amen.*

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling. Guide us, that we may become the people you would have us be. Direct us, that we may do what you would have us do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Blessing**

*Make the sign of the cross as you say:* The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that God has given us. May the blessing of God (+), Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us and those for whom we pray, this day and for ever. Amen.

### **Giving Thanks at Table**

Giving God,  
bless all who have gathered round this table.  
May we know the fullness of your presence  
at every meal and in all our sharing.  
*Amen.*



“When I lose myself in fear  
and its other side, blame,  
You tell me to take my  
being-me and give it  
to your being-You,  
which is ever full of  
unbecoming is-ness  
and unnameable no-  
thingness, so that  
together we might  
become a single  
and simple being-we.”

~ **Meister Eckhart**

### **Offerings**

Just a reminder: There are many ways to continue to invest in our shared ministry at St. Elizabeth during this time apart. You can still send your pledge or gift to P.O. Box 66579, Burien, Wash., 98166 or you can find us on Givlify.com. You can also find us at <https://resources.ecww.org/> Your gift will help to provide upkeep and maintenance of the building and grounds; allow church staff to maintain our ministry; ensure that normal operations can resume when the time comes. If you want to make a gift to the Rector's Discretionary Fund, which we use for those who have emergency needs, please indicate that on your check.

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Opening essay image: screen grab from YouTube video of people from 300 church groups singing “Be Thou my Vision” with an Irish blessing: [youtube.com/watch?v=TascsWZPj8U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TascsWZPj8U)

“Preparation” image: Photo of St. Elizabeth chancel & baptismal fount by Fr. John Forman

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Gospel image: detail of illuminated page for the month of March from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, the Limbourg brothers (1416)

Sermon image: photo of the tomb of Rebekah in Hebron, Israel, by Fr. John Forman.

Prayers of the people adapted from: Ramshaw, Gail. *Intercessions for the Christian People*. The Liturgical Press, 1990.

“Pater Noster” image: photo of Pater Noster in Polish at Carmelite monastery, Domaine de l'Eleona, Jerusalem, by Fr. John Forman.

Prayer of Spiritual Communion: adapted from a prayer by St. Alphonsus Liguori

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