

Simple Gifts

Church of the Holy Spirit Anglican

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. I Corinthians 12: 4

Rector's Corner

Lent begins in February this year. We celebrate Ash Wednesday, a holy day of obligation in the Anglican calendar, on the 22nd. Eucharist with imposition of ashes will be held at noon and again at 6:30 pm that day. Our bishops encourage all members of the parish to participate in one of these services if at all possible. Attendance is one vital part of what it means to experience a blessed, meaningful Lent.

We speak often of what it means to experience a good Lent. Two years ago, many in the congregation shared with me that Lent conveyed especially rich meaning to them. The church seemed to be soaked in an atmosphere of contriteness, humility, repentance, and a sincere desire among many to amend their lives. Our Friday *Way of the Cross* services were well attended, and many participated in that deeply moving time of worship every week.

For some reason (or reasons), last year's Lenten season may have seemed less focused than it was the year before. Several sincere brothers and sisters conceded that Lent seemed to pass by them void of feeling. The Spirit among us *seemed* to be dormant. And it follows that without a good Lent, Easter Feast was less festive. The past is now behind us, but a new Lenten season, passion week, and Easter now demand our renewed focus and attention.

It is my sincere prayer that this year, our congregation experience a truly blessed Lent. I believe that if we begin our preparations for Lent now God will bless us with every perfect gift, a radically complete immersion in His Spirit's presence with us this year. That is my prayer for our congregation. Will you make it your prayer as well?

A good Lent is never beyond our reach. God the Holy Spirit is not dormant but is alive and active in our midst. He desires more than we can ourselves that we enter into a life changing season of preparation for Passion week. He desires that we grow in our understanding of what the Cross of Christ is about, the cost of atonement that makes it possible for us fully to enjoy fellowship with our God. But as St. Paul in Galatians 5 reminds us, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." That is, we are being challenged to obey Him and seek His face.

A good Lent is ours if we are willing to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and allow *Him* absolute authority to examine us, cast light on those areas of darkness all of us have, and begin (or continue) His work of sanctification in us. A good Lent is in the active and not passive voice. By this I mean that it constitutes a season of self-examination under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

While this season of examination has an introspective quality it is *not* introspection because it invites others, especially God's Spirit, to help us see ourselves as they see us. It is always marked as a season of deep humility, openness to listen, repentance, and amendment of our lives, all centered in our willingness to allow God to address the sin in our lives. (Continued on Page 2)



Thank you note drawn by Katie Kunel.

The acolytes raised funds totaling \$1096! Look for the acolytes to be wearing new albs, cinctures, and crosses soon, thanks to your generosity. Thank you to all who gave. You blessed us tremendously!

What's Happening at CHS?

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Come to the

JOHN 3:16 Super Bowl Party

(More information on page 3)

Rector's Corner (continued)

Our sinfulness may afflict our lives in such subtle, attitudinal ways that over the course of years we simply learn to embrace that which we have become. We no longer repent because we no longer view our sinful attitudes for what they are. In his classic, *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis warned that "Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others . . . but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God 'sending us' to hell. In each of us there is something growing, which will BE hell unless it is nipped in the bud."

Perhaps the most common *complaining* hell we create for ourselves is the one Jesus identifies in Luke 6: 42: "How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

With the universality of our sinfulness well established in God's Word to us, why do we modern Christians struggle so mightily with the core matter of repentance? Why do we bristle when we are told that God wants us, as Lewis described it, to nip our sins in the bud? Across the centuries, St James implores us: "confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." We know this wisdom to represent the highest order of biblical truth for the community of faith, and yet how many among us are willing to follow through? How many of us are truly biblical Christians?

Anglican theologian." J. I. Packer, writes "Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty . . . acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours." Finally, it was St Ignatius who taught that "it is impossible for a man to be freed from the habit of sin before he hates it, just as it is impossible to receive forgiveness before confessing his trespasses."

So as I invite you to join me in praying for a remarkable Lent this year, I do so in recognition that each of us need take time even now to ask God through His blessed Spirit, to show us the error of our ways. None of us is exempt from this exercise. If you charter this disciplined course with me this year, bear in mind that while we are being challenged to change and to grow, we are not called to despise our lives. That is not the true Gospel. It is not what our heavenly Father desires for us.

Far from it. We are called to despise *not* our lives, which God loves, but we are called to recognize and despise our sins and the brokenness it has wrought in our lives. And we are called to repent. In Revelation 3: 19 our Lord admonishes all believers with these challenging yet comforting words, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and **repent.**"

We must repent, but just as importantly we must then accept the forgiveness that God lavishly bestows up us when we repent. The point is, we Christians are afforded the luxury neither to ignore our sinful estate nor to cower in the misery of our sins as if God has not forgiven us. (Continued on Column 2)

Vestry Highlights

As a vestry, we bid farewell to Ken Grabe, Darrell Lucht, Nellie Bewley and Jeff Morales as Jr. Warden. Their service to the vestry and to the church is greatly appreciated. CHS has officially left the Diocese of Ft. Worth with Bishop Iker's blessings and voted unanimously as a vestry to join CANA, and we look forward to welcoming Bishop Dobbs to CHSA on March 11.

As we move into a new year, exiting developments are happening in the area of youth ministry, as Devon Rock is volunteering his efforts to help in this ministry. Ken and Danita Grabe, as well as Bishop Cox, will be leading Alpha. The church has brought on a highly experienced childcare worker, Kayla Sedlacek and she will be in the nursery on Sundays and Tuesdays.

As a vestry, we continue to pray for the church, especially in areas of vision, direction and willingness to implement that which God envisions for us. We continue to give thanks for all God has entrusted to us and we look to the future with great hope in how we can continue to seek to do His will and give Him all the glory.

Your brother in Christ,
Pete West, Sr. Warden

Rector's Corner (continued)

In *A Cry for Mercy*, Henri Nouwen writes these words of assurance, "God's mercy is greater than our sins. There is an awareness of sin that does not lead to God but rather to self-preoccupation. Our temptation is to be so impressed by our sins and our failings and so overwhelmed by our lack of generosity that we get stuck in paralyzing guilt. It is the guilt that says, 'I am too sinful to deserve God's mercy.' It is the guilt that leads to introspection instead of directing our eyes to God. It is the guilt that has become an idol and therefore a form of pride.

"Lent is a time to break down this idol and to direct our attention to our loving Lord. The question is: 'Are we like Judas, who was so overcome by his sin that he could not believe in God's mercy any longer . . . or are we like Peter who returned to his Lord with repentance and cried bitterly for his sins?' The season of Lent, during which winter and spring struggle with each other for dominance, helps us in a special way to cry out for God's mercy."

“JAMES,” MERCY TRIUMPHS

By Beth Moore

Women’s In-depth Bible Study

Beginning on **Thursday, February 2!!**
Breakfast Kick-off – 10am, then Intro DVD
Adult Sunday School Room

When we get into the first week we will start at 9:30am for coffee and fellowship and go into the study promptly at 10. This study, as with all Beth Moore’s studies, digs deeply and requires homework.

Beth Moore, in my opinion, has been anointed in this Ministry and she makes things alive (which God’s word is). – Sue Hill

If you are looking for somewhere to start reading the Bible and getting to know what is in its pages, then here would be a good place. I encourage each and every woman to join us. You will not be disappointed.

Crazy Love

Ladies, please join us on Saturday, **February 4** as we continue our study of *Crazy Love* by Frances Chan. This book will challenge and inspire you to abandon complacency and status quo Christianity to pursue a deeper, more intimate walk with the Lord.

All are welcome in the lively discussion, warm fellowship, and compassionate prayer. We meet from 10:30 until noon at Sue Dodd’s house.

JOHN 3:16 SUPERBOWL PARTY

CHSA Youth and all helpers will meet at CHSA at 4pm

Anyone wishing to join us there, please plan to come anytime between 4:15 and 6pm.

Food will be prepared and ready to serve by 6:00.

All volunteers are welcome!

Ash Wednesday is February 22

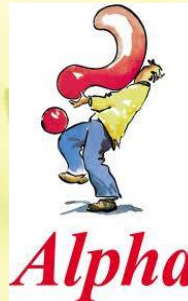
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Thanks to Doug Ross (See Exodus 7-12)

02-14-2003

AND ONCE AGAIN, THE PHARAOH’S CANDY HEARTS WERE HARDENED



The Alpha course will begin Wednesday, February 15, with dinner at 6pm. This is a great opportunity to invite friends who aren’t sure what they believe about God. For more information contact Ken and Danita Grabe.

Prayer for Healing Love

Loving God,
hear our prayers for those
who need the sound of your love
spoken clearly into their winter-weary souls.
Too many days our attention has settled
on ourselves instead of focusing
on your invitations to love others.
May our responses to your love be love.

With our whole hearts,
let us spend our love with abandon
and risk our love with no thought for our own gain
so that our neighbors will know your caring love,
the hurting will know your healing love,
and those who we say we love
will know that indeed we do.

From: *Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons*
By Sharlande Sledge

Who was Saint Valentine?



Cupids. Candy. Flowers. Lacy hearts. Strange, isn't it, that the best known Christian saint on the secular calendar -- a holiday devoted to romantic love -- is a martyr for the Christian faith? How did the "Saint" disappear from Valentine's Day? Can we "re-Christianize" the celebration of this popular holiday? Who is Saint Valentine, anyway?

Saint Valentine *did* "die of love", to be sure -- but not of the romantic sort! Strange, also, considering its enormous popularity, that this saint's feast no longer appears on the Church's calendar. (Officially, February 14 marks the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodias, 9th century missionaries to the Slavs.)

There are at three different Saint Valentines, all of them martyrs, mentioned in the early martyrologies for the date of February 14th.

One is described as a priest in Rome, another a bishop (of Interamna, the modern Terni). Both apparently were martyred in the second half of the third century and buried at different places on the Flaminian Way outside of Rome. The third St. Valentine was martyred in Africa with a number of companions. Almost nothing is known about any of these early Christian men -- except that they died for the love of Christ!

The popular customs connected with Saint Valentine's Day's probably originated in medieval Europe. At that time, when "courtly love" was in flower, there was a common belief in England and France that on February 14th, precisely half way through the second month of the year, birds began to pair. A developing belief about "love-birds" is probably the reason Saint Valentine's feast day came to be seen as specially consecrated to lovers, and as a proper occasion for writing love letters and sending lover's tokens.

This association with romantic love, along with the medieval revival of interest in classic literature, no doubt led to the "paganizing" of this martyr's feast, so that the Roman god, Cupid, took the place of the saint in the celebration of the feast. In Roman mythology, Cupid, the son of Venus, was a winged immortal who had the mischievous habit of shooting invisible arrows into the hearts of mortals, which inflamed them with passion.

The Golden Legend, a medieval book of stories about saints, says that Valentine, a priest, was imprisoned by the emperor Claudius II for leading people to Christ. While Valentine was being interrogated by a Roman officer, the priest preached Christ as the "one and only Light". The officer, who had a blind daughter, challenged Valentine to pray to Christ for her cure. The girl was cured, and the entire family were converted to Christianity. According to legend, while awaiting execution, he wrote notes of instruction, affection and encouragement to the Christian community in Rome, which were secretly delivered by a boy who visited him in prison.



Children and Church Attendance

A clear body of research from Duke University, Indiana University, The University of Michigan, The Center for Disease Control, Barna Research Group, Gallup, Pew, and the National Institute for Healthcare Research, and several national surveys has demonstrated the following to be true:

Regular church attendance:

- significantly reduces your child's use and risk from Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs
- increases the average life expectancy of your children by 8 years
- dramatically lowers their risk of suicide
- helps them rebound from depression 70% faster
- dramatically reduces their risk for committing a crime
- improves their attitude at school and increases their school participation
- reduces their risk for rebelliousness
- reduces the likelihood that they would binge drink in college
- improves their odds for a "very happy" life
- provides them with a life-long moral compass
- provides children with a caring extended family
- ***and will also statistically improve the odds that they will lead an active church life later on in their adults years***

We require that our children attend public schools. We require that they take care of their teeth and visit the dentist regularly. But too often, we send signals to our children that God and His church are optional features of life, which tells them that God is a secondary concern to the more meaningful, worldly demands of life.

From GotQuestions.com

CHSA numbers are up in nearly every regard except one. Our average Sunday attendance is down a bit over last year. Here's a question we might ask: among Spirit-filled Christians, is irregular church attendance a good idea; is God okay with it? Some obviously think so, but God's Word teaches otherwise. The following brief article appeared at GotQuestions.com:

Question: "Why is church attendance important?"

Answer: The Bible tells us we need to attend church so we can worship God with other believers and be taught His Word for our spiritual growth (Acts 2: 42; Hebrews 10: 25). Church is the one place where believers can love one another (1 John 4: 12), encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13), "spur" one another (Hebrews 10:24), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), honor one another (Romans 12:10), and be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32).

When a person trusts Jesus Christ for salvation, he or she is made a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). For a church body to function properly, all of its "body parts" need to be present (1 Corinthians 12:14-20). Likewise, a believer will never reach full spiritual maturity without the assistance and encouragement of other believers (1 Corinthians 12:21-26). For these reasons, church attendance, participation, and fellowship should be regular aspects of a believer's life. Weekly church attendance is in no sense "required" for believers, but someone who belongs to Christ should have a desire to worship God, receive His Word, and fellowship with other believers.

Some report they attend church less frequently these days because they aren't getting much out of the fellowship and worship. Church just isn't what it used to be. Or "I just don't feel as good coming out of church as I think I once did." On the other hand, only 30% of our time and talent forms were returned to the church last year. Could it be that you are called to be in church, not so much to "get something out of it" but to *give* something to others, like the newcomers who visit us nearly every week? Could it be that, as mature Christians, you are called to be with us in worship each week because God wants you to help minister to others. And could it be that in ministering to others, you just might actually get back something very special in return.

Every parish needs more greeters, more people willing to serve children and youth, visitors, more folks to help serve meals, more willing to evangelize, more to help with our music and more to be present to hear what are musicians do in worship, more to encourage our children who are learning in Sunday School or Catechesis, or who serve the church as acolytes. The list of encouragement ministries is limitless.

Recommended Resource: *Stop Dating the Church! Falling in Love with the Family of God* by Joshua Harris.

Church of the Holy Spirit - Anglican

February Birthdays

2/01	L.T. West	2/14	Charlotte Hillenburg
2/03	Devon Rock	2/14	Susi Garrison
2/03	Charles Schoenfeldt	2/16	Bruce Thompson
2/07	John Lane	2/21	Rayella Booton-Brown
2/12	Fr. Cliff Horvath	2/22	Emily West
2/13	Kathy Roberts		

February Anniversaries

2/09 Richard & Bobbie Lowry
2/27 Robert & Kathy Roberts

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