

Hark! The Herald

Volume 22 Number 2 The Newsletter of St. Luke's Anglican Church, Merced, CA February, 2016
A Welcoming Family...Worshipping Christ...Sharing His love with others.
Serving Jesus Christ since 1879

From the Pastor's Desk

“St. Luke's Anglican Church: A welcoming family, worshipping Christ and sharing his love with others.”



It seems unbelievable, having just left the Christmas season, but we are already nearly to Lent. Ash Wednesday is on February 10 this year, which means it is already time to begin prayerfully considering our collective and individual practice of Lent.

Rather than thinking about Lent primarily as a tradition or a season, I think it is most helpful to think about it as a spiritual discipline. We practice Lent to clear away the clutter of our spiritual lives and make room for loving the Lord. Traditionally, there are three pieces of this discipline:

- 1) Give something up
- 2) Give time to the Lord
- 3) Give something to those in need.

I think most people associate Lent with the first one. You will probably hear people say that phrase, “I can't, I gave that up for Lent,” many times over the next weeks. The most traditional thing to give up is food, but the focus is a sparser and simpler eating, rather than going hungry. Many people give up meat, sugar, and alcohol, for example. Others give up eating entirely for one day a week (usually Fridays). Food affects us so deeply that a change in what we eat can shape our daily experience in deep ways. So, fasting of any kind is not a diet plan but a way to intentionally remind ourselves to pray, to meditate on what Jesus did for us, and to practice serious discipleship. If you do fast from food, remember two things. First, always take health into consideration. Do not skip medications or otherwise go against your doctor's advice. It is better to fast by eating plain but healthy food, than to compromise your health by skipping meals, if that would do harm. Second, hospitality is an act of love that trumps your individual practice. So, for example, if someone invites you to their house and serves something you are fasting from, simply accept graciously without mentioning your fast. Giving and receiving hospitality can help us avoid pride and self-righteousness as we fast.

However, what we give up does not have to be food. Consider the distractions in your life. Is there something you could stop doing for Lent that would allow you to listen to God, spend more time in silence, or avoid temptation? This may be something that is not bad in itself, but it might be worth letting go of for Lent. Perhaps you could give up television or having the radio on in your car. Maybe you will not shop (other than for groceries and other necessities) during Lent. Perhaps you find yourself talking with others in a way that too often strays into gossip or cruelty, and you are going to practice “zero tolerance” for Lent (“for Lent I will not say anything that might even possibly be gossip or criticism, even if it might be okay”). A “zero tolerance” practice for Lent can help us find balance again, so that after Lent we can better discern what should and should not be said to and about people (for example).

Second, Lent allows us to practice giving time to the Lord. This can mean a longer formal time of prayer if you already pray (or possibly starting to pray daily if your current habit is inconsistent). It can also mean forming a habit of pausing briefly throughout the day to pray and think about God for a few minutes. It can mean studying the Bible in more depth, or it can mean memorizing and meditating on a few verses. It can mean reading a Christian book, such as a spiritual classic. It can also be creative. Maybe the best practice this Lent would be to go for a walk each morning or evening, but to commit that walk to God as “time together,” in which you can sometimes talk to God and sometimes simply be together silently. I have also

known people that wrote a poem each day or week during Lent, or worked on art over the course of Lent as a devotional practice. Whatever you might add, the focus is on giving time to God, both as an act of love and as a way to listen to Him.

Finally, Lent is a time to give to others, particularly those in need. Those needs include financial poverty. Our food pantry is up and running again, and we will be regularly providing meals to those in need through Love INC here in Merced. You can contribute food for our pantry or money for our pantry team (led by Monica Bittis) to purchase groceries. You might also consider giving directly to Love INC, Alpha Pregnancy Help Center, or other excellent organizations that will give help in loving and responsible ways. However, giving does not have to be primarily financial. You can also give your time to these groups. Wouldn't it be wonderful if these groups knew that Lent was a time when they could count on a special gift of volunteer hours from local churches? You can also give to those who have needs other than financial poverty. Maybe this Lent you could visit one or two of our shut-ins or parishioners in the hospital each week. Finally, remember that prayer too is a gift to those in need. Pray for healing, life transformation, and spiritual growth for specific people during Lent. Pray that a friend or family member who is far from Jesus will respond to His call (as a specific step, you might spend all Lent praying as preparation for inviting someone to come on Easter Sunday). Pray for a specific person who has financial or health needs, adding prayer to the other forms of help we can offer. Prayer is more powerful than we understand, and it is only by praying for specific requests that we get to see specific answers (which then help us to grow even more bold and faithful as we pray for the next need we see).

In all these things, remember that Lent is not about earning God's love by being better, more hardworking, Christians. God's love is already infinitely generous, and we are already perfectly loved and accepted. Lent is about freeing up time and attention to receive and respond to God's love. We receive and respond to God's love in the things we let go of, the things we focus on, and the things we act on. May Lent be a season of love this year.

Blessings,
Fr. Ryan



Are you looking for something to read during Lent? Here are recommendations from Fr. Ryan:

God For Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Lent and Easter

Edited by Greg Pennoyer and Gregory Wolfe

A collection of readings (shorter daily devotions with additional sections for each week) from wonderful writers, such as Kathleen Norris and Lauren Winner. I recommend getting it in the hardback edition, which would go well on a coffee table, to fully appreciate the beautiful art paired with the readings. There is also a companion book that I recommend for Advent and Christmas.

Word in the Wilderness: A Poem a Day for Lent and Easter

By Malcolm Guite

Malcolm is an Anglican priest in Cambridge, England, but he is also an accomplished poet and scholar. In the collection, he offers classic and contemporary poems, including some of his own, as a devotional for Lent and Easter. Some are overtly religious, while others take some more reflection to connect to Lent. He includes a thoughtful short essay for poem, offering insights for those who love poetry and help for those who are new to it. It seems that this book is temporarily in limited supply, so you might need to look around for it. Like the previous book, this one too has a companion book for Advent and Christmas.

On Loving God

By Bernard of Clairvaux

My all-time favorite spiritual classic. It is short enough that you could read it in an hour or so, and it

Pantry Update

During the month of January, we have been making a few changes in the Pantry operation. First, the Pantry now has its own budget thanks to the money donated each month. It will be located in the office by Norvell Hall so that we can separate the inventory into food groups (Thanks Mike and Max). Next, we will be shopping for needed items from the monetary donations we receive in order to keep basic items on hand. Also, using the fund money, we will continue to purchase fresh food according to each family's needs. We will also be depending on the following donations: cereal, breakfast bars, canned soups and crackers, spaghetti and red sauce, canned stews, fruit and meats.

As you may already know, St. Luke's is in partnership with Love, Inc. So we definitely have grocery requests throughout the month. If you have any concerns, or suggestions, please see me or Jim after Mass. Finally, my deep appreciation goes to Patti McClain for her guidance and suggestions as we updated the whole process. She is our hidden "star" for sure. Thanks ahead of time and blessings to all your "sweethearts" and to those in need. Monica Bittis

Vestry News

The Vestry has selected Mike Waite to serve as Junior Warden, Jim Hill to serve as Clerk and Karlyne Paul to serve as Treasurer for 2016. Thank you for your willingness to serve Christ and St. Luke's Parish in this capacity.

2016 Sign-up Sheets

The 2016 lists for First Friday, Men's Night Out and Altar Flowers are posted on the bulletin board in Norvell Hall.

Coffee Hour Ministry

FEB 7	Sharon Graham, Linda Cometta and Kathy Hill
FEB 14	Lee Ann Mercurio, Wanda Pehl and Glenda Small
FEB 21	Joan Brammer, Ann Bean and Mady Montague
FEB 28	Darlene Clouse, Cheryl Mayo, Justine T. and Loretta Stuart

An Update from Fr. Ron

Dear Beloved Friends,

Linda and I continue to make adjustments here in Round Rock. We have bought a house and our new address is:

2153 Paradise Ridge Dr., Round Rock, TX 78665

We have some minor work to do on the house before move in. By mid-March we should have the bulk of our "stuff" delivered and somewhat in place. We still have some "stuff" in storage in Merced and will make a trip out to get it once the weather is more agreeable.

We have plenty of room, so please don't hesitate to include a stopover at our place in your vacation travel plans.

Our love and blessings to each and every one of you. Looking forward to worshiping with you when we are back in Merced.

Love,
Fr. Ron

Up-Coming Events

February 5 – First Friday Family Fellowship, Location TBA

February 9 – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in Norvell Hall
Suggested donation is \$5

February 10 – Ash Wednesday Services 7:00 am, Noon, and 6:00 pm

February 12 – Stations of the Cross at Noon on Friday's during Lent

February 15 – Office closed for President's Day

February 17 – Soup Suppers & Lenten Studies 5:30 – 7:00 pm throughout Lent

February 21 – Bishop's Visitation

Diocese of San Joaquin Defense Fund

Make check payable to St. Luke's Church, earmarked for the Defense Fund.

By representing the Diocese, they are representing us.

Remember them in your prayers during the appeal process.

News from the Diocese may be found at: www.dioceseofsanjoaquin.net

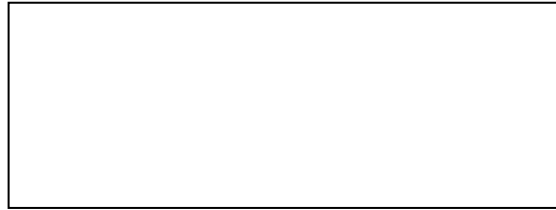


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Address Service Requested

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ARTICLE DEADLINE FOR *HARK! THE HERALD* IS THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH.
Send articles to office@stlukesmerced.org

Visit us at our website: www.stlukesmerced.org

Weekly Services

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Holy Communion [Children's Church meets during the Service]

Church Staff

The Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach, Archbishop, Anglican Church in North America
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Eric Vawter Menees, Bishop
The Rev. Ryan Bradley, Rector, E-mail: rector@stlukesmerced.org
Mrs. Mady Montague, Choir Director; Mrs. Marilynne Isenberg, Organist
Mrs. Patti McClain, Administrative Assistant; Mrs. Sue Linardos, Sexton

Members of the Vestry

Class of 2016
Mrs. Sylvia Bankson
Mr. Richard Blank
Mr. Fred Dutton
Mrs. Karlyne Paul, Treasurer

Class of 2017
Mrs. Linda Meyer, Sr. Warden
Mr. Mike Waite, Sr. Warden
Mr. Rob Mercurio
Mr. Jim Hill, Clerk

Class of 2018
Mr. Ed Gardner
Mrs. Kathy Hill
Mrs. Maria Laurel

Diocesan Convention Delegates

Norman Montague, Calvin Nixon, Shirley Vaughn-Hulbert; Karlyne Paul, alternate.