



HARK! THE HERALD

The Newsletter of St. Luke's Anglican Church, Merced, CA

June 2016



From the Pastor's Desk

Why did we do it?

In 2007, the Diocese of San Joaquin left the Episcopal Church. St. Luke's was given the option to leave with the Diocese or to stay with the Episcopal Church. Bishop Schofield graciously offered any church that wanted to stay with the Episcopal Church the opportunity to leave with all their property and no threat of legal action, while those who left the Episcopal Church had to suffer through huge legal bills and the possibility of losing all material possessions of the church. To be blunt, the de facto policy of the Episcopal Church has been, "if you try to leave us, we will do everything we can to end your church." In spite of the loss of security and the possible loss of our property, St. Luke's (along with about 90% of the diocese) chose to leave the Episcopal Church. We have been in legal limbo ever since, and as we wait to find out if the California Supreme Court will accept our case, we still don't know what will happen next. However, there is a very real chance that we will lose our property, paying a very serious cost for our decision. As we face that potential cost, it is time to once again ask, "Why did we do it? Why did we leave?"

At the heart of our departure from the Episcopal Church is a fundamental shift in their theology that occurred over several decades. Our basic understanding and commitment is that God reveals Himself and His teaching primarily through Scripture which is completely trustworthy and authoritative. Secondly, tradition and reason aide Scripture by giving us guidance in areas in which Scripture is silent or in which people might disagree about the interpretation of Scripture. Some people, following John Wesley among others, add "experience" as a fourth source of teaching from God. That is, that our individual and shared experience of God also guides us. Experience of this kind can be quite useful in some areas, but it is also the most open to misunderstanding and abuse, as we tend to "read" our own experiences in ways that benefit ourselves. Gaining practical wisdom from our own experience and (especially) from the experience of others is a necessary part of Christian growth (as taught in the Bible, particularly in Proverbs). However, it must be submitted to the authority of Scripture to avoid fooling ourselves. Put simply, when the things we think we have learned on our own contradict God's teaching in the Bible, we are the ones that made the mistake.

For decades, the Episcopal Church had been moving further and further in the direction of

using experience to “correct” the Bible. Sometimes, this was explicit, claiming that the human authors of Scripture were trapped by their own time and culture, so that we had to correct their prejudices. This view missed the truth that God inspired Scripture, such that it does not reflect the failings of their human authors. So the Apostle Paul surely had his prejudices, but the Epistle to the Romans (for example) does not.

As I write this, our diocese has filed an appeal to the California Supreme Court, in the hopes that St. Luke’s (among many other churches in the San Joaquin Valley) will be able to remain on our property. We don’t know what will happen next, but we are doing our best to plan for each possible outcome, while continuing to pray that we’ll keep the property.

As we face the possibility of moving, though, it’s important to look back at why we made decisions that could cost us so much.

Our situation goes back to a split in Anglicanism that has been developing for decades. I sometimes hear people at St. Luke’s say, “we used to be Episcopalian but now we’re Anglican.” I understand what they mean, but that’s not quite right. St. Luke’s has always been Anglican, and Episcopalian was the group within Anglicanism with which we were connected. Our situation is a bit like changing the state that you live in, without giving up your nationality. Saying that we are “Anglican but no longer Episcopalian” is like saying, “I am an American, but now I’m a Californian rather than a Virginian.” So, we are going through a division within Anglicanism. Sadly, it is very much like a divorce, in which emotions can become heated and there are difficult disputes over property.

The “symptom” that caused the split in Anglicanism is a difference of theology about human sexuality. The deeper issue is our differing understanding of the authority of Holy Scripture, and a willingness to either submit to God’s will as revealed in Scripture or to instead insist on going “our own way” apart from God’s will.

The Episcopal Church became committed to the belief that God is leading them into new teachings that replace those found in the Bible. Their claim is that the moral teaching of the New Testament is undermined by the beliefs and culture of the human authors (even though they were inspired by the Holy Spirit). Thus, they see it as their task to correct the teaching of Scripture by way of their own moral views. Because theology and morality are woven seamlessly together in Scripture, this also leads to the rejection of other biblical teachings in favor of new beliefs created by people to replace God’s revelation.

Sexuality is just one example of this, but it is a particularly clear one. The only God-honoring context for sex (according to Scripture) is within the marital union of a man and woman. We are committed to helping those who are unmarried (whether heterosexual or homosexual in

their attractions) to remain faithful in chastity and those who are married to remain faithful and committed lifelong partners.

We recognize the challenge, particularly faced by those with same-sex attraction, to remain faithful to God's plan for human sexuality. Rather than rejecting the challenge to remain faithful, however, we see the difficulty of the challenge as an encouragement to the Church to dedicate ourselves not only to our own faithful following of Jesus but to forming a community that supports every member in following Jesus. So, we want to befriend those who are struggling with same-sex attraction as they follow Jesus, but we cannot re-write Scripture to tell them to embrace and affirm their temptations.

The Episcopal Church has also shifted to an understanding of Jesus as "a" way to salvation, rather than as the one and only way to God the Father. Sometimes this is boldly stated by Episcopalian clergy and theologians who openly declare that they do not believe in the God of the Bible or that they are both "Christians" and some other religion (Muslim, Buddhist, etc.), yet continue to serve in good standing. The practical result is that most Episcopalians have long ago given up on evangelism. If Jesus is only one of many ways to God, why bother telling anyone about Him? When such a perspective is effectively affirmed for years, it can creep up on us over time, even if we don't formally accept it. So, some of us can find ourselves feeling that evangelism is somehow distasteful or unnecessary, after years of not hearing that it is essential or seeing it in practice. That's a perspective we need to strongly reject. If Jesus really is the only way to be saved, then we need to introduce everyone we can to Him.

So, what does our current situation - our move from the Episcopal Church to the Anglican Church in North America - give us?

1) We remain Anglicans, in our tradition and beliefs, and in our relationship with and acceptance by the vast majority of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

2) We affirm the Bible as God's revelation. It is perfectly trustworthy, and we seek to follow God by submitting to His teaching in the Bible.

3) We can confidently invite others to join God's people, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Each and every person needs the saving work of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way to the Father. We have the mission and privilege to share Jesus with them.

BRINGING CHRISTMAS to 3000 Women

The Annual Holiday Gift Bag Project sponsored by the Inmate Family Council at the Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla, would like our help at St. Luke's.

Each year many supporters in local churches, community organizations and individuals, participate in this project. It's simple! Just save items such as greeting cards, scratch pads, soap, bath gel, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes etc. These small sized personal hygiene needs are often picked up from hotel stays. Shirley will coordinate for St. Luke's and the Merced Coordinator is Dave Hetland of the United Methodist Church. Just give your items to Shirley, then during the first part of December a team comprised of members from different churches will put together baggies for distribution.

There are flyers in the Narthex for your information. Remember, GROWTH and OUTREACH go hand in hand. Church Growth Commission

Note: Here are two of the many thank-you notes received from inmates:

"I really appreciate the gift you gave us. It got me thru a really bad time-God Bless You" - MM

"Thank you! Christmas really seemed like Christmas to get a gift from a stranger- The true gift of Christmas is love in people's hearts and I am grateful for yours" - Barbara

Could Someone Please Tell Me How To ...

It's probably fair to assume that most adults at St. Luke's know how to conduct their day-to-day lives. We know how to budget, cook, and maintain a home; we've learned how to gain and keep employment, and we've passed these skills onto our children, just as our parents passed them onto us.

For foster youth, learning life skills is not always a natural process, and St. Luke's Growth Commission contacted the Merced Human Services Agency (HSA) to see if there is a way our Church members could help them, as a way to thank and serve God.

We learned that HSA has an Independent Living Skills program for youth aged 16-21 who are preparing to age out of the foster system. Volunteers are needed to teach classes



Christian Nurture at St. Luke's

Sundays

Children's Church meets in Norvell Hall during the worship service and is for children in the primary grades. They follow a liturgy designed for them that is based on the gospel lesson for that Sunday.

Church Growth Commission

Church Growth Commission will meet on Saturday, June 18th at 10:00am in the Emma Hunt Room. Add yourself to Shirley's email list - Luke22936@aol.com or call at 722-4782. We only meet once a month for an hour...no long meetings!!!! Blessings, Shirley.



Up-Coming Events

June 3 – First Friday
6—8 pm

A Potluck in Norvell Hall
Desert will be provided.

June 5 – Sisters of Prayer
10:30 am

June 9 — Vestry 5:30 pm.

June 14 —Men’s Night Out 6
pm, Location TBA

June 18—Growth Commission
10 am

June 19—Father’s Day

June 19—Worship Com-
mission 11 am

Pantry News

Please remember donating to the pantry either with non-perishable items or else with money in an envelope marked “Pantry fund.” We are counting on each of you during these vacation months. Blessings!



in whatever subject interests them – job seeking, budgeting, clothing maintenance, minor repairs, etc. etc. HSA is open to your ideas.

Classes are held at the HSA site downtown, usually on a weekday evening, with staff present. All volunteers need to bring is their knowledge, a class plan and a willingness to help, though to begin the process they must complete an application, pass a background check and be fingerprinted (with the cost covered by HSA).

Is this something that interests you? Shirley Vaughn-Hulbert and I would be happy to provide more information, and we have application forms available.

Suzanne Miles

Growth Commission member

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.

Coffee Hour Ministry

JUNE 26 Lee Ann Mercurio, Wanda Pehl, Darlene, Cheryl, Loretta, Sue

JUNE 5 Connie Baumgartner, Jessie Hall, Ted Linardos

JUNE 12 Trudy Holck, Glenda Small, Susan Souza

JUNE 19 Darby Minturn, Linda Cometta, Darlene, Cheryl, Loretta, Sue, Ada

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

Class of 2017

Mrs. Linda Meyer, Sr. Warden; Mr. Mike Waite, Jr. Warden; Mr. Rob Mercurio

Class of 2018

Mr. Ed Gardner, Mrs. Kathy Hill, Mrs. Maria Laurel

Mrs. Karlyne Paul, Treasurer; Mr. Jim Hill, Clerk

Diocesan Convention Delegates

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

Contact Us

St. Luke's Anglican Church

Office Business Hours:
M - F 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Phone: (209) 383-1888

FAX: (209) 383-4935

Web site:

www.stlukesmerced.org

E-mail:

office@stlukesmerced.org

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

A Welcoming Family...Worshipping Christ...Sharing His love with others

St. Luke's Anglican Church

350 W. Yosemite Ave.

Merced, CA 95348

Address Service Requested

PLACE
STAMP
HERE