



# HARK! THE HERALD

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

October 2017



From the Pastor's Desk

## What are funerals for?

In the two years I have been at St. Luke's, I have lost count of the funerals I have been involved in or attended. Most were for members of St. Luke's, although a few were for our "extended family" of parents, children, or siblings of members. Every time I preach at the funeral of a Christian, I try to remind everyone that we respond with both celebration and mourning at the death of a Christian. Celebration because our brother or sister is with God. Mourning, because they are temporarily separated from us. Communicating this message in the sermon, the liturgy, and in conversations before and after the service is central to my role in funerals. It is also a calling that you share as a community of spiritual brothers and sisters at St. Luke's. Both immediately after the loss of a loved one and for months and years after, we need our church family to keep helping us both celebrate and mourn. Both of these are best accomplished by listening. Spend time with those who are grieving, both to hear their stories about the one they lost, and to hear their feelings about the loss. Some people want to tell stories about what an admirable person the deceased was, others want to recount funny stories or warm memories. Some people have sad or even angry stories to tell, but putting those stories into words helps them release those feelings and find compassion and understanding. Similarly, there is a huge variety of emotional experiences people have when they grieve. Some feel overwhelming sadness and cry immediately. Some feel numb, and may worry that there is something wrong with themselves. Some feel strong emotion months or years after the death. Some feel a long, slow, and subtle discovery of grief. None of this is right or wrong, nor is there one "normal" to grieving. Listening to someone talk about their feelings, about the person who died or about their own experience since the death, is an act of love that helps the person both understand their experience and moved forward. Moving forward, by the way, does not mean "getting over" the loss. Rather, it means letting the loss become one important part of your life, rather than the central part.

So, then, what is the funeral service for?

First, the funeral is a worship service. It is first and foremost about God,

even more than it is about the person who has died. This may seem strange, and it can cause some confusion. Most people think of the funeral as only about the person who died (just as most couples think about weddings as only about the two of them). However, the funeral is a religious service focused on the grace of God, who gives eternal life. It is a celebration of the gift of that eternal life to a Christian who has died and an invitation to that life for all others who have gathered. Including the Eucharist as part of the funeral service is optional, but I strongly recommend it. Taking communion at a funeral adjusts our focus to God. This does not take the focus away from the person who died, but rather puts the life and death of the deceased in the context of God and His Kingdom.

In thinking about the funeral this way, it is very helpful to remember that the funeral service is not the only activity we do to honor or grieve for the deceased. Many people hold visitations, viewings, or wakes. Most have some sort of reception afterward. Often, when I meet with a grieving family to plan the funeral, they think that everything important has to happen at the funeral service (and thus, anything not in the service isn't important). However, these other activities have their own character and value. An open microphone for spontaneous sharing does not fit with the religious service of an Anglican funeral, but it can be a wonderful part of a reception. When someone speaks from the front of the church, the expectation is that the church is (in some sense) endorsing what they say. I haven't had to do this at a funeral yet (thank the Lord), but if someone said (for example) that everyone goes to heaven during the sharing a funeral where I am the celebrant, I would have a duty to correct that "teaching" during the service. But, wouldn't that be an awful time to publicly correct someone! Similarly, there are stories that really shouldn't be shared during a church service but would be wonderful to share during a reception. On a purely practical level, spontaneous sharing can feel like it is going on forever during a service when no one knows how many people are going to share. However, when you are at a reception, you can eat and drink, stretch your legs, use the restroom, or go outside for a minute. All that makes the sharing feel more like a gift than a performance, and more like a community sharing their love.

Together, the funeral service and the other activities (such as a reception) allow us to keep God central, while also meeting the other purposes of the funeral: to honor the deceased and to care for those left behind. On the night when I was ordained a priest, the service was focused on God. It was about His work, His calling, His empowering. Relatively little was said about me. Still, I felt deeply honored and supported. Similarly, the service honors the deceased, even as it focuses on God. Wakes, receptions, sharing an obituary, and other activities add to this honoring.

Funerals are also about being together, remembering and grieving as a community. They are about gathering around those who feel the loss most, such as spouses or children or parents. At the same time, the whole

## Up-Coming Events

- OCT 1**—Sisters of Prayer
- OCT 6**— First Friday 6-8 pm @  
Nancy Olson's  
6015 N Country Club  
Place, 756-1098
- OCT 9**—Columbus Day
- OCT 10**—Men's Night Out 6-8  
pm in the conference  
room
- OCT 15 & 22** —African Team  
Ministries Fundraiser  
in the conference  
room
- OCT 19** —Vestry 5:30 pm
- OCT 27-28**—Convention

## Tote Bags

St. Luke's tote bags are available for \$10 each. Contact Nancy 384-8034, nanmausmith@gmail.com



See Cheryl Mayo  
to coordinate  
bringing food for  
coffee hour.

community is allowed to celebrate and grieve together. Every now and then, someone will say, "when I die I don't want a funeral. I don't want all the fuss." The answer to that is, "respectfully, your funeral isn't all for you. It is for everyone else too." Funerals give us an opportunity for closure (again, not to forget or move on, but to be able to continue our lives shaped rather than stopped by the death of someone we love). It is also at funerals that many feel most fully loved and valued by their church.

Blessings,  
Fr. Ryan



Delicious food, comfortable facilities, the view of sailboats on the lake, and a perfect breeze for calm sailing created a truly glorious day for our Lake Party. Thank you to our hosts, Gary and Amy Davis, for the use of the club and sail boat rides. Thank you to all those who provided the delicious sides, desserts and soft drinks. A very special thank you to Mike, Calvin, Brian, and Kyle for setting up, cleaning up, and cooking all those hamburgers and hot dogs.

There will not be a committee meeting in October. Plans are under way for the Bowling Party. More news on that to come.

Karlyne Paul

Committee Co-chair

## ***A Heartfelt Thank You!***

Dear Fr. Ryan and all of St. Luke's family,

Our deepest thanks for your prayers, many cards, and presence at Jason's funeral. Father organized a beautiful service and seeing you there to share hugs was extremely supportive and comforting. Indeed, St. Luke's folks are a "light unto the world." Praying for all of you daily.

Jim and Monica Bittis

## **Annual Holiday Gift Bag Project**

*Bringing Christmas to women in the Central California Women's Facility*

As in past years, Shirley is collecting articles for gift bags. Suggested items are: travel size soap, bath gel, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, lotion, greeting cards, scratch pads and postcards.

Cash donations are also needed to purchase additional items and required packaging materials.

Checks may be made payable to Wesley Methodist Church with "Prison gift bags" on the memo line. Leave items in the office or see Shirley Vaughn-Hulbert. The deadline is December 3rd. Flyers with more information are in the conference/coffee hour room.

**First**  
**FRIDAY** **October 6th**

Nancy Olson's home from 6—8 pm

6015 N Country Club Place, 756-1098 Please call her at 383-1431 and let her know you are coming. Bring an appetizer and your beverage.

Love INC's Annual  
**RUMMAGE**

**S A L E**

**Saturday**  
**Nov. 4th • 8am - 3pm**  
**United Methodist Church Merced**  
**899 Yosemite Parkway**

**Volunteers Needed & Donations are being accepted!**

**(NO CLOTHING OR BOOKS, PLEASE)**

**To donate items call Kelly Perry 209/383-7034 ext. 140**

**ALL PROCEEDS RAISED WILL HELP LOVE INC SERVE FAMILIES IN NEED**



**Weekly Services**  
Sundays  
10:00 am Holy Communion

**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](mailto:rector@stlukesmerced.org)  
Mrs. Mady Montague, Choir Director; Mrs. Marian McFarland, Organist  
Mrs. Patti McClain, Administrative Assistant

**Members of the Vestry**  
Class of 2017  
Mr. Mike Waite, Sr. Warden; Mr. Rob Mercurio; Max Dalrymple, Jr. Warden  
Class of 2018  
Mr. Ed Gardner, Mrs. Kathy Hill, Darby Minturn  
Class of 2019  
Mrs. Cheryl Mayo, Mrs. Karlyne Paul, Treasurer; Mrs. Victoria Schuller  
Mrs. Nancy Tapia, Clerk

**Diocesan Convention Delegates**  
Karlyne Paul, Mike Waite; Richard Blank, Kathy Hill, Sylvia Bankson alternates.

## Contact Us

St. Luke's Anglican Church

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Friday 8 am—Noon

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ARTICLE DEADLINE FOR  
*HARK! THE HERALD* IS THE  
20<sup>TH</sup> OF EACH MONTH.

Send articles to:  
[office@stlukesmerced.org](mailto:office@stlukesmerced.org)

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

**St. Luke's Anglican Church**  
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Merced, CA 95340

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