

President's Note for March 2020

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Thoughtful words from our martyred brother in Christ whose life we attempted to examine a bit last year during Lent. A proper start down that path, that test, may well lie for us as Christians and citizens, leaders and representatives in words I've heard our Pastor Emeritus James Townsend express on multiple occasions, which are to examine our choices and actions by utilizing an "enlightened Christian conscience." I pray for that divine enlightenment for each of us, our nation and our world, a world that seems to battle a trend towards division, selfishness, demonization and judgment. Perhaps we should heed these words of Blaise Pascal: "Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much." We will never agree on everything, yet we can agree to temper our disagreements by trying to see the good in others while weighing our words, see the letter of James chapter 3. We are what we are, an imperfect image of our perfect Maker, and yet we strive to look to our Lord and become better versions of what we are. We can also look beyond ourselves and to the kind of world we want to leave for our children and grandchildren, particularly during this season of Lent when we become more reflective and more aware of our fallenness, sinfulness and mortality. Pastor Townsend reminded us at a midweek service recently of an expression that St. Augustine would use when leading in worship while calling congregants to the altar to celebrate the Eucharist: "Come receive what you already are." St. Augustine explains that we, believers, are the church and the body of Christ here on earth so when we go to the altar, fallen and foolish we may be, yet, we must still give thanks for the gift of life and salvation we receive when we partake in communion. As a reminder, the word Eucharist itself comes from the Greek word eucharista, meaning thanksgiving. Having given thanks and received our Lord's body and blood we are called to go forth to "love and serve the Lord" like little Christs, emissaries of our Lord and our God.

So, what will be taking place here at St. Paul's in March during this season of Lent 2020? Well, continuing with tradition, we will be holding our annual Soup Suppers and Devotionals on Wednesday evenings starting at six pm in the Fireside Room. A signup sheet for those able and willing to make and bring soup is in the Fireside Room now. This year we've taken a slightly different route from our norm by, rather than watching a documentary as is customary for us, electing to view a film titled *Risen*, a film composed of a mixture of real documented, known events mixed with historical fiction. This depiction looks at the life of Christ from the crucifixion forward from the perspective of a non-believing outsider, a Roman soldier named Clavius who is sent to be the right hand enforcing arm of Pontius Pilate. Clavius is assigned by Pontius Pilate to track down this Jesus, Jeshua in the film, and his disciples and that quest leads to unimaginable revelations for this bright but earthly and ambitious Roman warrior detective and protagonist.

You may have heard by now that we have a few uninvited visitors in our sanctuary that we are looking to expel, namely termites. I understand we had an issue with this gnawing problem some years back. Rest assured we will be taking the steps necessary to correct this pesky, or should I say pesty, problem.

You'll also notice the mysterious large wooden cross that appeared on our property several weeks ago from an unknown benefactor is now placed in a prominent spot on our campus on the lawn near Broadway and 59th. Perhaps this large cross will remind the community of the season and the presence of our houses of worship here on our prominent, much traveled corner.

As I write this note, the terrible, devastating fires in Australia are on the wane with the coming of much needed rain. We give thanks for those rains and pray that we receive some much needed rain and snow here as well. Many of us remember and hope for a repeat of the "March Miracle" of a few years back. The Corona virus in Wuhan and the Hubei province of China seems to have slowed in its growth there, though now there are cases in Italy, Iran and to a lesser extent here at home. We pray for those threatened by this frightening illness and that this illness will soon come to an end. We also pray for those in the region and throughout the world who struggle not only with their physical health but with

their mental and spiritual health, particularly for those who live in fear for living and sharing their faith, as with far too many of our fellow Christians in parts of China, Colombia and portions of Africa and the Middle East.

Finally, a couple of years ago we watched a documentary on the life of Augustine as part of our Lenten journey. Again and again we seem to turn to St. Augustine and to St. Paul and of course Martin Luther for words of guidance and assurance. I opened with a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose life we studied last year during Lent, and will conclude with a quote from St. Augustine whose life we examined the year prior. More than ever we need the love, presence and forgiveness of our Maker.

"O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams." St. Augustine

Respectfully,

Chuck Prewett

Council President