

**Episcopal Church of Our Saviour
Newsletter
February 17, 2021**

Beginning the Season of Lent



Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254)

In the ancient Christian church, the Easter Vigil was the night when catechumens (those who had been studying for months to prepare for their baptisms) would symbolically enter into the waters of new birth and emerge members of Christ's body, the Church. Modern day baptismal practices rarely do justice to the drama of those ancient nights. The catechumens would be asked to stand on a hair-shirt (a mark of penitence), confess their sins, and renounce Satan and all the forces of wickedness that drew them from the love of God. As they did this, they would turn toward the West – the direction associated with death, since the sun always sets over the western horizon. Then, they would turn and face the East – the direction of new life and resurrection.

As they watched the sun begin to rise, they would make their profession of faith and walk into the large font. The fonts would likely have been shaped as crosses or sarcophagi (a larger, more elaborate casket) to call to mind Paul's words about being buried with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-11). A jar of oil would be poured over their heads, and they would be dressed in a gleaming white garment. Finally, they would be ushered into another room where all their Christian brothers and sisters would greet them. The room was lit with the new fire of Easter, and they were invited to their first Eucharist.

This ancient rite has been adopted into our modern Easter practices and every baptism. In our baptism, we have turned from a life of sin and begun to walk the Way of Love back to God. In our baptism, we have turned from death itself and been joined with Christ in his everlasting life. And in our baptism, we have turned from living a life alone and have become one with the whole Church as members of the Body of Christ. In his letter to the Romans, Paul laid out his theological belief that baptism is the turning point in our new life with Christ. It is the time that we leave the life of sin and death behind us to be born into life that is eternal.

I invite you as you begin this Lenten season to write down your hopes and prayers for this journey. Imagine that you are starting this time by facing toward the metaphorical West in your life – the habits, beliefs, or behaviors that draw you from the love of God – and make a commitment to turn away from them. See this as an opportunity to turn to a new way of life with God, which is promised to us in baptism.

May you have a Holy Lent guided by God's wisdom and love. **Mother Carol+**

Genevieve Clay

So what is the daughter of a fourth-generation Presbyterian minister doing coming to the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour? Well, it's like this...

I was born in Kingsport, Tennessee in February 1940. My father was the minister of the Rogersville First Presbyterian Church. I was born in Kingsport because there wasn't a hospital in Rogersville at the time. My brother joined the family in August 1942, and he was born in Rogersville. We all moved to Atlanta in early 1944, where my brother and I started school. My grade was named for the creator of the Uncle Remus stories.

We remained in Atlanta, where dad was minister of the Gordon Presbyterian Church, until August 1949, when dad accepted a call to the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Kentucky. I "grew-up" at Maxwell St. and attended Morton Jr. and Henry Clay High Schools.

An interest in music began early. After being in the percussion section of the school band which played for Governor Happy Chandler's inauguration, I graduated from the snare drum to the viola, a move I've never regretted. I was in the Central Kentucky Youth Orchestra for two years and was part of the group which played for a national string-teachers meeting in Carnegie Hall in April 1958.

Following Henry Clay high school, I was eager to "spread my wings." I fell in love with the pictures of the gothic-looking buildings of the Southwestern At Memphis (now Rhodes College) in Memphis, Tennessee. I went to school there for four years, another move which I've never regretted.

In the meantime, however, one of the Maxwell St. church Elders was a contractor who did some work at the home of a lady who was head of the Acquisitions Dept. of UK's Margaret I. King Library. She became my first mentor. I worked in Acquisitions every summer between years at Southwestern. After graduating from college in 1962, I found full-time employment in Acquisitions. And fortuitously met and married a librarian in July of 1965.

We were married for a year when this librarian-husband accepted a job in the Crabbe Library of Eastern Kentucky University. I was able to tag along as a clerk and was soon encouraged to get a Master's Degree in Library Science myself, which I did. It was the security I needed when hubby died at home of natural causes just a few months short of our ten-year anniversary.

I remained working at Eastern's Library and was fortunate to meet and marry an English professor. He continued teaching for several years after we were married, and then he simply "walked out of the classroom" saying he didn't like all of the hoop-la associated with teaching and advising students. He had a large personal library of which he was knowledgeable and justifiably proud. We were happily married for thirty-some-odd years. By the time he died of natural causes in 2013, I had been retired from the library since 2007.

Although my husband joined Richmond's First Presbyterian Church with me, he appreciated and introduced me to the Episcopal traditions. I have been active in Richmond's First Presbyterian Church for over fifty years and have been active in the music program as well as having been on the Session and served a Clerk of the Session for eight years (under five different ministers and temporary pastors). However, as time has gone on, I have been increasingly afflicted with rheumatoid arthritis. I have found comfort in the long-time beautiful Episcopal liturgy and found physical comfort in navigating the smaller structure of the church. So, thank you for accepting me "as is"!

Written and Submitted by **Genevieve Clay**

New and Improved Garden for the Hungry Report 2020

The ECOS Garden for the Hungry had a very productive and challenging year. We were self-sustaining through donations from the church, produce sales and our hard-working group of volunteers. Fifteen volunteers, including three children, helped grow crops from a 16,000 square foot garden space. As always, we regularly gave produce to Madison County food banks and soup kitchens including the Berea Food Bank, St. Thomas, Grace Now, God's Outreach, Hope's Wings, the New Liberty Family Shelter and

St. Paul's AME. We grew 19 different crops and six herbs and volunteered over 550 hours of time, giving away over 3,181 pounds of food for the hungry.



Due to COVID and time constraints we did not participate in any Farmer's Markets this year. The needs of the community were greater and our bountiful crops helped feed many hungry people. We sold produce in August to get funds for next year's seeds and supplies. Ian Feedback, ECOS church member, was our Garden Assistant and we are very grateful for his expertise and hard work. We were able to use federal PPP funds to help pay him.

We are planning for the spring garden and have a work day set for **March 3 at 11:00**, weather permitting. Volunteers welcome!

We'd like to thank the congregation for its continued support and also recognize the volunteers who have worked so hard in this outreach effort. Submitted by **Michele Gore**

Bishop Mark's Fireside Chats

We have been blessed by the wise and compassionate leadership provided by Bishop Mark Van Koevering. He has also been very committed to open communication and transparency. He is providing a fireside chat once every two weeks on Thursdays on the diocesan Facebook page. It is a wonderful way to keep up-to-date with what's happening in our diocese. His next fireside chat will be on **Thursday, February 25** (12:15 PM to 12:45 PM) at <https://www.facebook.com/diolexky>

Celebrating Black History Month

The Richmond-Madison County Chapter of the NAACP, the Kentucky Arts Council, and the Richmond Area Arts Council have collaborated to provide a virtual event of music and spoken word. It will feature many different musicians and artists and will be available to watch on You Tube on **Saturday, February 27** at 6 P.M. at this link: [youtube.com/kathybullock](https://www.youtube.com/kathybullock).

"Mighty God, could it really be that simple?"

At the start of the Senate impeachment trial on February 9, Senate Chaplain Barry Black, a 7th Day Adventist minister, offered this prayer:

"Let us pray. Eternal God, Author of liberty, take control of this impeachment trial. Lord, permit the words of the New England poet James Russell Lowell to provide our Senate jurors with just one perspective, "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide in the strife of truth with falsehood for the good or evil side." Mighty God, could it really be that simple? Could it really be just truth striving against falsehood and good striving against evil? Powerful Redeemer, have mercy on our beloved land. We pray in your magnificent name. Amen."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKAZON54Z8>

If his Lowell quote sounded familiar, this may be why: it is a segment of a poem "The Present Crisis", written by Lowell, an abolitionist, in 1845 in opposition to the Mexican War and expansion of

slavery. Sixteen lines from the poem made their way into hymnals including the 1916 and 1940 Episcopal hymnals and the 1906 English Hymnal. However theological objections arose from literalists about the next phrase in the hymn: “Some great cause, **God’s new Messiah**, offering each the bloom or blight” because for Christians there is only one Messiah. Still it was a powerful poem paired with a strong melody so some hymnals kept the hymn but simply tweaked the offending phrase to read, for example, “Some great cause, **some great decision**.” (Baptist, 1991) or “Some great cause, **some new decision**” (Presbyterian, 1955). Many recent hymnals, however, including the *Hymnal 1982* (Episcopal), have simply dropped the hymn altogether. Did they omit the hymn because of this phrase, or because, as one writer has suggested, it’s not “gender-inclusive” and treats “good” and “evil” as absolutes? A writer for the *New York Times* in 1986 described it as “an old warhorse given the coup de grace by the Episcopal Commission on Church Music because its theology was considered erroneous.”

But the author of a *Washington Post* op-ed in 1986 wrote that its omission from the *Hymnal 1982* annoyed “many who identify it as a powerful anthem of Christian social responsibility.”

A Presbyterian minister in 2018 wrote about this hymn “But I turn to it today in ways I never have



before, and I’m left to wonder whether some things are just plain evil.”

And an Episcopal priest, Richard H. Schmidt, chose to include it in his book *Sing to the Lord an Old Song: Meditations on Classic Hymns* (he uses the phrase “some great cause, **some new decision**” in his text while the hymn he includes in the appendix reads “**some great decision**”). Fr. Schmidt prefers the more complex old hymns (such as the forty in his book) as better suited for meditation than modern “praise music” with “repetitive texts” and “stock phrases.” Here are some of Fr. Schmidt’s thoughts about this hymn:

- Sometimes the moment to decide really does just come once, after which there is no turning back.
- Both nations and individuals can make irreversible decisions “sacrificing their souls for bogus promises.” Reminding the reader that this poem was written as a political protest, Schmidt suggests that nations do this “when fear, xenophobia, and greed define their national life.”
- That doesn’t have to be the end of the story but “putting back together a nation broken by such policies is a daunting and uncertain task.”

A few more thoughts: Are these verses appropriate for a current hymnal even though written for a particular event in 1845? Should the poet’s original words be tampered with? Does substituting “new decision” or even “great decision” weaken the impact of the original?

Did Lowell really mean to replace Jesus as Messiah? Would better understanding of the use of metaphors in poetry allow us to keep this phrase in the original? And finally, should the Episcopal Church restore this hymn in the next Hymnal supplement or new Hymnal?

Here is Lowell’s entire original poem:

<https://poets.org/poem/present-crisis>

And here you can listen to two settings of the hymn in very different locations, both of which use the original wording. The first includes the words so you can sing along. If heights make you nervous you might want to avoid the second! (Just kidding...)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHzXKTWcTg0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPge1mTfRwU>

Sources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/30/nyregion/new-episcopal-hymnal-introduced-gently-to-parishoners.html>

Richard H. Schmidt, *Sing to the Lord an Old Song*. (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 2019).

<https://gordoncstewart.com/tag/once-to-every-man-and-nation/>
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/06/11/hymns-revisited/b4f23ca6-1727-4cf0-9b94-758781a0c8b0/> Submitted by Jane Rainey

In Honor of President's Day this week: Lincoln's Religion

In his Second Inaugural Address, our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, distilled his personal troubles, finally articulating his clearest statement about religion.

He called the Civil War humankind's failure to heed God's warnings and see slavery as itself sinful. He made much of the plight of the slave who, even today, was unable to realize the promise of the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. All the destruction and death were ample evidence of God's anger. In fact, one critic says the Second Inaugural Address has the feel of a Puritan "jeremiad," a speech attempting to cleanse, in Lincoln's world, the stain of slavery out of the body politic.

Lincoln always had trouble because of his religious convictions. He said in one of his early campaigns in which much was made that he was not a member of any church: "I never denied the truth of the Scriptures, and never spoken the intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular." In a flurry of self-righteousness those in the South often defended slavery, as a "sacred right of self-government." Throughout most of his life, Lincoln, a "doubter" of organized religion almost literally wrestled with the scriptures to ascertain the will of God: "Certainly there is no contending against the will of God, but there is some difficulty in ascertaining, and applying it to certain causes.

He was, like many of us, a "doubter" who fought his unbelief with questions only God can answer. But he remains the most bible-quoting president, the *Everyman* not afraid to admit his difficulties with religion. Submitted by **Marshall Myers**



Ancient Joke of the Week

At our weekly Bible study, the leader asked an elderly gentleman, Walt, to open the meeting with prayer. Walt did so in a soft voice. Another man, straining to hear, shouted, "I can't hear you!" Walt replied, "I wasn't talking to you." —Richard Steussy, Reader's Digest

Thanks to all who contributed to this issue. If you have any news items or articles that you would like to submit, please email me at rukasa05@aol.com. **Linda Myers**