

December 13, 2018

“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”

On Sunday, December 16

— 8 am Said Eucharist

—10 am Sung Eucharist

—11:15 Coffee Hour,

Fr Bill Baker will be our celebrant.

Inside this issue:

— “Reconciliation”: Advent article from Fr Bill Baker

—Meetings, Events and Church Service schedules for the next few weeks

—St Martha’s photo

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Ascension This Week



Reconciliation

Fr. Bill Baker

I heard Sunday’s Gospel! A voice crying out in the wilderness, John the Baptist, “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.” I preached that message in an Episcopal church in Torrington, Wyoming. You can find that sermon on our Facebook page, but I want to summarize it here and offer something for all of us to add to our Advent Discipline.

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance of our sins. In Greek the word is “metanoia”, which means to change. Isn’t that what acknowledging our sins is about? We recognize through our sin that we injure our relationship with God and then through repentance we begin to repair the relationship and change our lives.

I do not know what John the Baptist thought repentance should look like. I could guess he did not envision a ritual act of “Reconciliation of a Penitent” like we have on page 447 of the Book of Common Prayer, but he might have. I believe that speaking our sins (or even just our struggles) aloud, changes them and us. They are no longer shrouded in the shame and secrecy or locked in our heads.

By sharing our sins with another person, we also allow ourselves to begin to move past whatever we have done (or not done) and start the process of change through repentance. I know that going to face -to-face reconciliation can seem daunting. Don’t let the fear that you will be judged or the formality of the service stop you from receiving the assurance that God loves and forgives all our sins.

With regard to the judgement, I want to confess something. If you are my friend, I remember the stories you tell me. However, when I worked in Social Services, for some reason I seem to file the details that my clients told me away and not really remember them. I believe I did it intentionally. I heard some really horrible stories when I worked with survivors of domestic violence. I think forgetting what my clients told me about the abuse and trauma they suffered allowed us to move forward without constantly focusing on what occurred in the past.

I got pretty good at the technique. If a client mentioned something about their story, I usually could not remember it right away. In fact, in some cases I could not remember the story at all and I needed to say something like, I seem to have forgotten that story, could please tell me again. I intend to employ the same technique with the stories told to me during the service of the Reconciliation of a Penitent.

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I am also willing to use the Prayer Book Service as a guide. If you feel like the process should be less formal, we can be less formal. Just talking without the Prayer Book is also allowed. I want everyone in the church to feel comfortable approaching me about their struggles. We all have them.

On Saturday, December 22, 2018 we will meet to decorate the church for Christmas. Afterwards, we will share a meal together. I would like to invite anyone who feels called to engage in the spiritual discipline of Reconciliation to do so on that day after we are done eating lunch. If you are not coming to decorate, but would like to come for Reconciliation, we should be ready to start around 1:30pm.

If December 22 does not work for you, I am willing to meet with you another day that is convenient. I am always willing to meet with anyone in the church to talk or go for a walk or to have a formal service of Reconciliation of a Penitent. Advent and Lent are great times to think about repentance, but every day offers us a chance to consider what we would like to change about our lives and start the process. My door remains open. Please contact me, if you need to talk or just need some support.

Advent Blessings!
Fr. Bill+



The photo above is of the St Martha's Guild luncheon which was held on December 2nd at Bella Vita. It's a composite of two photos—one with Fr Bill in the photo and one with Fr Roy in the photo. That's why the table down the middle doesn't line up. But you do get all the happy faces. Thanks, Fr Bill and Fr Roy for taking these photos!

Save the Date: Upcoming Events for Richmond Episcopal Ministry:

The Advent Book Study Group that was planned for **December 2, 9, and 16** has been **postponed**. It will be scheduled after the New Year. The book is "Following the Way of Jesus", written by The Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry and other authors and published by the Episcopal Church.

Saturday, December 15: Breakfast with Santa at St John's, Eccleston Hall, 10:30AM—12:30PM.

Saturday, December 15: Fr. Bill is hosting a parish Christmas Party on Saturday, December 15th at 5:00PM in the Ascension Rectory. All are welcome to bring a dish for the table!.

Sunday, December 16: Lessons and Carols at St Paul's Church, 3PM, featuring Voyces and Young Voyces. For ticket information and reservations, contact St. Paul's: stpaulssi@aol.com Or call: 718/273-9572. Admission also sold at door.

Saturday, December 22: At Ascension, we will be decorating the church for Christmas starting at 10AM. And after the work is done we will be treated to chili prepared by Fr Bill! If you can help we will be very happy to see you there. Please contact Nancy Murphy for more information.

Saturday, December 29: Ascension will host a Christmas Dinner for the residents of Lakeside Manor, which will be prepared by Fr. Bill and Hunter Jordan. Artie & Joan are putting together goodie bags for each resident. The day will start with Holy Eucharist at 12:45. Anyone who would like to volunteer their time as ushers, servers, etc. should be at the church at 12:00, as the residents will arrive at approximately 12:30. Please contact Fr Bill for more information.

Ascension's Chinese New Year Dinner is planned for February 9, 2019.

Christmas Church Services at Ascension on Monday, December 24:

- Family Christmas Mass at 5PM
- Christmas Carols singing at 10:45PM, followed by Christmas Eve Mass.

And on Tuesday, December 25, Ascension will have a Christmas Day Mass at 10AM.

