

August 1, 2019

“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, August 4

—9 am Sung Eucharist

The Rev Maxine Cleghorne will be our celebrant

—10:00 am Coffee Hour

—2:30 pm Service at Lakeside Manor

Inside this issue:

—“Politics and Religion” article from Fr Bill Baker

—flyer for the “Summer Raffle” fundraiser

—Rural Migrant Ministry Appeal

—Save the Date events list.

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No exceptions.** 
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Ascension This Week

Politics and Religion — from Fr Bill Baker

You shouldn’t preach politics!

Luckily, I have never heard anyone around Ascension or St. John’s say this, but as we roll around to another election cycle it might seem tempting. I know our church. It seems clear to me that some of us voted for the President and some of us didn’t. We are a church of diverse ideas. If we discussed politics, we would not agree on everything and that is okay.

However, I disagree with the notion that the preacher should never preach about issues that fall into the realm of “politics”. I just believe that we need to speak about politics without being partisan. Almost everything that Jesus did was political. He stood up to the political powers of the day and that is why they wanted him gone.

It’s easy to listen to the Gospels and despise the Roman Empire or think that the government was corrupt. It is believed that up to 90% of the people living under the Roman government lived in abject poverty. Jesus lifted up the poor and vulnerable and welcomed foreigners. How our society takes care of the poor and policies on immigration are top political issues of the day. The two political parties espouse ideas about the best way to accomplish their agendas, but I am not sure that their agendas always consider the most Christian way to respond.

Sometimes, I feel like Christians can and do stand outside of political parties. For instance, I honestly believe the Church (that’s “Big C” Church) needs to take care of the poor, regardless of what the government does or doesn’t do. When I read this week’s Gospel about not storing up treasures, I complained to Liz. She responded something to the effect that it isn’t that we can’t have money, but we just need to share it with those who have less. I constantly pray and think about what our world would look like if we had the will, to do God’s will, and take care of everyone equally.

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As Christians, I think we need to discuss the issues of the day and we need to do it with civility. I attended a workshop while in seminary entitled, "Preaching and the Public Square". One idea that emerged on the subject was that no matter where people stand on any issue, there is always common ground. This workshop took place the day after some Congress members were shot while practicing for the yearly "Congressional Baseball Game for Charity".

The practices and the game take place in Alexandria, VA, where I lived for seminary, and most of us were still in shock over the shooting when the leader talked about gun violence. The speaker, one of my seminary professors, The Rev. Frank Wade, carefully chose his words and didn't use words like "gun control" or "freedom". He said that if anyone wanted to preach on the subject that Sunday, they might just start by saying, "No one here today wants anymore lives lost to gun violence," or "We all care for the lives impacted by this shooting and those vulnerable children impacted by school shootings."

Frank went on to say depending upon where the congregation was on that issue that might be as far as the preacher might get on the subject on that Sunday. But he also said that we need to start some healthy conversations in our churches. As Christians we need to be able to discuss political subjects and try to discern what God wants us to do about them.

If you are unsure about what you might say on a subject, please reread the newsletter article from June 27, 2019 about how listening shifts hearts. If we are generous and ask open questions about a subject, really trying to understand where our brothers and sisters are coming from, we are bound to have a discussion that allows both parties to grow. We might not always agree, but we need to listen and try to understand each other's perspectives.

I invite all of us to listen. Listen to each other, and listen to Jesus' words in the Gospel, and even listen to those people with whom we disagree. No subject should be too political or be labeled as "off limits". I believe, we just need to stop being partisan and divided. Just follow the guidance from last's week's Gospel from Luke and ask—ask for God's will to be done and "knock and the door will be opened to you"!

Blessings, Fr Bill+

"Brother, Give Us A Word." Every day, on the Society of St John the Evangelist (SSJE) website, one of the brothers gives a word that we might use as a focus in our prayer and meditation.

"Heart": *"We cannot speak peaceful words if there is no peace in our hearts. We cannot offer life-giving words unless the Divine life is within us, ready to be offered to others. We cannot speak with compassion and love unless these virtues are actually growing in our own hearts."*

— posted June 9, 2018. You can see a full page of comments on this word on SSJE.org.

Take A Chance—and Help the Church “Summer Raffle” at Church of the Ascension



This year, instead of our annual yard sale, we are introducing our first “Summer Raffle”.

Raffle tickets are \$20 for a book of five tickets or \$5 for each individual ticket.

And what are the prizes?

First prize = \$500
Second prize = \$250
Third prize = \$100

Winning tickets will be drawn at the Annual Ascension Picnic on September 15, 2019 following the 10 AM Eucharist Service.

Winners don’t have to be present to win, but please join us on September 15 for Mass and for the picnic.

Tickets are available at the church or you may contact Roy Williamson, (718) 448-9508.

Return your tickets and contributions at Sunday or Wednesday church services or mail them to the church:
Church of the Ascension
1 Kingsley Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10314

All tickets must be returned before the picnic on Sunday, September 15, to be eligible to win.
Call (718) 442-4187 for more information.



Save the Date: Upcoming Events for Richmond Episcopal Ministry:

Ascension "Summer Raffle" In progress now and continuing until September 15, Ascension is holding a fund-raising raffle. Tickets are \$5 each or \$20 for a book of 5. The winners—first, second and third prize amounts—will be drawn at the Ascension church picnic on September 15. See flyer in this newsletter for details.

Friday, August 9: Lucky Draw Auction at St John's. Doors open at 5:30 pm. \$5.00 for admission and a book of tickets. Coffee and cake served, and a concession stand open for purchase of other food.

Sunday, August 11 at Ascension: "Mass on the Grass", one service at 9am, followed by coffee hour with ice cream.

Wednesday, August 14: Holy Eucharist at 9:30, including prayers for healing. Join us for coffee hour after the service.

Saturday, August 17: Please join us at 5:00 pm on Saturday, August 17, and every third Saturday of the month for a healing service at Ascension. As many of you know, Arthur Ullstrom has a spiritual gift of healing prayer. He will be joined by Fr. Bill and Deacon Geri for the laying on of hands and prayer for healing.

Sunday, September 15: The annual Ascension Church Picnic. Winners of the "Summer Raffle" will be drawn.

Sunday, October 13: Annual Oktoberfest dinner at Ascension.



We are collecting funds for the Rural & Migrant Ministry Camp this week. Please make your check payable directly to them and we will forward all collected funds next week.

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<http://www.ascensionsi.org/>