

August 8, 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 11

—9 am Sung Eucharist -
Outside on the lawn

—10:00 am Coffee Hour

—2:30 pm Service at
Lakeside Manor

—6 pm AA meeting

Inside this issue:

—“Gun Violence”
article from Fr Bill Baker

—flyer for interfaith
candlelight vigil *tonight*
August 8, 7:30pm

—flyer for the “Summer
Raffle” fundraiser

—Save the Date events
list.

Two healing services this coming week: Wednesday August 14, at the 9:30am service, and Saturday August 17 at 5pm



Ascension This Week

Gun Violence — from Fr Bill Baker

Some weeks are harder than others.

The events of the last week hit me hard. I have felt every emotion—sadness, fear, anger, hope, confusion and the list goes on. I also turned to God in prayer to ask what to do and how to respond, more than once. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I would like to share some of my observations. As I have mentioned in my newsletters recently, if we disagree, we need to have the courage to listen to one another, and the respect to talk about these issues with other Christians. Please share your ideas with me and each other.

Most of you know, I grew up in Nebraska, where hunting and fishing are common sports. I hunted during my childhood and at 12 years-old I took Hunter’s Safety. In those classes, and, of course, from my dad, I learned so many things, including the proper use and storage of a gun. I believe that people who want to hunt should be allowed to own guns. But I will confess, although I was exposed to guns, I always felt fearful of them. I always understood the power of guns to injure and kill.

In my thoughts and even in my prayers, I have ruminated on whether or not Christians should own guns or not and whether God asks us to forgive, rather than seek revenge. I will write more about this next week. I have also thought and prayed about whether Christians should be willing to give up our “rights” to guns to make everyone else safer and how we should respond and take actions, if necessary.

Last week, during the week, I wrote a sermon about the need for all of us to share with one another. After living through the horror of two mass shootings in 13 hours, I decided to set that sermon aside and quickly rewrite another sermon. Again, I prayed, and (I believe) that God helped me write a new sermon. This was an action, inspired by the Holy Spirit, after prayer, which I took. That sermon, although preached at St. John’s, is on our Facebook page.

As I just mentioned, my meditation led me to the question of gun ownership. Does God, through scripture, give us any clear indication about whether we should own or use guns? Defend ourselves? Seek our own justice? I am not sure that God tells us anything definitive about any of the items that we own. However, we are warned in last week's Gospel not to store up treasures from this world. I think that is a clear indication that Jesus did not want us to covet anything, including our rights to guns.

But Jesus saw the society in which he lived. He saw swords. He knew war existed. I do think that Jesus preached peace. That is clear in the Sermon on the Mount, in Chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel, about "turning the other cheek" and about praying for "those who persecute us." And in 1 Peter 3:8-9 "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

I am not unclear about guns that individuals own for hunting and both my father and my sister own handguns that they use for target shooting. I would never want to stop the sales of those types of guns for anyone. Of course the guns that were used to perpetrate the heinous act of the last week are military style assault rifles. These guns really only serve one purpose—war! In my opinion, there is no need for these types of guns to be in the hands of anyone.

We can also learn from the success that other countries have had in stopping mass shootings. In 1996, after a mass shooting in Port Arthur Australia, that country passed the National Firearm Agreement (NFA). The NFA outlawed military-style assault rifles and required that all those type of guns be bought back by the government. Since that time, Australia has seen no new mass shooting and gun deaths are down. That seems like something worth trying here. Shouldn't we at least try what worked in Australia and other countries that ban assault weapons?

We also need to find other areas of common agreement. 90% Americans believe in background checks for gun ownership. The House of Representative recently passed two bills to strengthen background checks. One which will extend the wait from 3 days to 10 days and allow the authorities to investigate the potential buyers and another to make background checks mandatory even on private sales. That seems reasonable to me.

Now we just need to convince The Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, to allow the Senate to vote on both pieces of legislation. If you feel inclined to speak to the Senator's office and encourage him to bring these bill to the Senate floor, please call Senator McConnell's office and ask him to put these two bills to a vote. His numbers are 202-224-2541 in Washington and 502-582-6304 in Kentucky.

As Christians, I believe we are always being called to act on behalf of God and others. We need to find ways to work across political party lines and come to a solution, so that no more lives need be lost by gun violence. Tonight, on the steps of Borough Hall at 7:30, there will be a vigil to remember those who have died and to plan the next steps for action. Please consider joining us!

Most of what I wrote in this newsletter comes from my prayers and discussions I have had with folks, in person and on Facebook, over the last few days. I am happy to say, that all of these discussions have been respectful and thought provoking. These are my idea, I believed inspired by prayer, but are not complete or definitive. We must keep praying and asking for God's guidance and we must seek unity on these and other tough issues. Peace be with you!

Blessings, Fr Bill+

Candlelight Vigil for El Paso and Dayton

Interfaith clergy and community leaders will offer prayers for people killed this weekend in mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton. All are welcome to hold a candle during this solemn moment of remembrance even as we commit to take the actions needed to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Steps of Staten Island Borough Hall

Thursday, August 8th

7:30pm

**Staten Island Inter-Religious Leadership
Communities United for Respect and Trust
Staten Island Immigrants Council**

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's "Summer Raffle" fundraiser is in progress now and continuing until September 15. Tickets, \$5 each or \$20 for a book of 5, are available at the church or you may contact Roy Williamson (718) 448-9508. 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.



"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.

"Healing": *"Throw off the shackles that have bound you and the chains that have weighed you down. Cast away the fear and doubt and guilt and shame that have kept you from becoming the child of God that you are. And come. Come to be healed."*

— posted March 30, 2018. You can see a full page of comments on this word on SSJE.org.

