

May 14, 2020

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



Ascension This Week

**Do Not Let Your Heart Be Troubled —
from Fr Bill Baker**

On Sunday, May 17

— All services, classes and meetings held in Church of the Ascension are cancelled until July 1, 2020. We continue to have morning prayer and the Sunday Eucharist Service on Facebook, and now have added weekly Bible Study and a virtual coffee hour on Sundays on Zoom.

**God loves you.
No exceptions.** 
The Episcopal Church Welcomes You. www.dohio.org

Inside this issue:

—“Do not let your heart be troubled” from Fr Bill

—“Remember your Pledge” reminder

—Save the Date reminders and announcements. Two meetings now taking place regularly on Zoom.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” John 14:1

No one sets out to have our hearts be troubled. Sometimes we face circumstances in life that are just out of our control. No amount of our own planning and effort can make it better, or could have even prevented it from occurring. Hard things happen. We feel at a loss about how to fix it all or feel that there is nothing we can do about our situation. Sound familiar?

Sometimes life or our situation seems too broken. We may try hard to regain some sense of order, but life can still feel unbalanced, uncertain, even chaotic, because of the pressures of life. Our hearts become troubled. It seems pretty natural. Sometimes, it might be the most appropriate initial response.

Jesus understood our pressures. He lived here, too, and his heart certainly seems troubled in the garden the night before his Crucifixion. God sharing our nature means that Jesus felt everything we feel and understands it. So, when he tells us not let our hearts be troubled, he most certainly knew that we would be inclined to have troubled hearts. His last night on earth Jesus sought to comfort his disciples. In Chapter 14-16, just after washing their feet, Jesus reminds his disciples that soon he will no longer be with them, but to give them comfort, the Holy Spirit will be with them (and us) always. Then in Chapter 17 Jesus offers a prayer to the Father. Jesus doesn’t just tell his disciples not to be troubled, he explains to them that he will send another to help them and to guide them and then he prays for his disciples. He sought to comfort his followers before his own death.

But that is not the end of the story. And that is not the end of Jesus’ advice to the disciples and to all of us. Jesus knew that his disciples would see even more difficult days ahead, but that their belief in him would get them through it. How many of us have drawn strength from witnessing someone who is gravely ill and instead of feeling scared, they offer bedrock assurance to those around them that they know where they are going when they leave this earth and through their faith they know who their heart belongs to.

When Edwina shared the story about her mother-in-law on Sunday, I thought about my own mom. She lived, sometimes struggling, with cancer for more than 7 years, when the doctors originally told her she had 2-3 years left. When she knew that she was close to the end, my dad still wanted her to have another surgery, but my mother said no, she was ready to go to God. I went to her hospital bed after she made her decision, the one that if she made it out of she knew she would be going home to hospice care. On New Year's Eve 2009, just before boarding a plane to return to New York City that night, I visited my mother and my heart was more than troubled. I gave my kids to Kate and my dad and kicked everyone out of the room. I poured out my heart and I cried and cried. I told my mother everything.

Surprisingly, she didn't cry. She told me she wasn't scared and that she was ready to go. She told me she knew where she was going. She felt at peace. She brought me peace and comfort that day. She told me (by her actions) not to let my heart be troubled. She believed in God and she believed also in Jesus.

You all know how important my mother was in my life. Losing her still feels like the most important loss I will ever face. Many of you saw my Facebook post this week about Mother's Day and her birthday. They fell on consecutive days this year, but on those days, I felt so distanced from any feelings about her. It felt strange. Maybe this pandemic had my heart troubled or maybe I felt afraid to feel the full emotion of the loss of my mother.

The days passed as if they held no significance and I confess, I felt troubled by not feeling troubled. At first I assumed that this might be the new normal or just that after 10 years the sting no longer felt as deep—maybe time had healed the wounds. Then, a couple of days ago, I decided to play melancholy music and for a few minutes I wept for the loss again. But then my mind soon turned to brilliant and wonderful thoughts of my mom. Again, I felt her comfort me. God truly sent the Holy Spirit out to comfort us. Sometimes that comfort comes when the Spirit is resting on another person and they comfort us. Edwina certainly felt the Spirit power in her mother and grandmother who taught her about living as a faithful Christian early in life, and then later on, in her mother-in-law who comforted Edwina during the difficult time of her mother-in-law's diagnosis of cancer.

If these pandemic days have you down or you are worried by the death of a loved one, you are allowed for your first reaction to be troubled, but remember that Jesus wanted to comfort us during those times of trouble. He sent the Holy Spirit to us as a comforter and advocate. Sometimes she rests on us, but often she rests on other people who offer us God's comfort. My mom still comes to offer me comfort and her memory of her belief still enlivens and strengthens my own faith.

Friends, during these troubled times, do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Jesus!

A few people asked me if they could still write about their Good News to share with everyone over the coming weeks. I encouraged a number of people to continue writing and reaching to share their joys, challenges and successes. If they keep coming in, we will share one or two each week.

Liz must have known that I would be writing about comfort, because her Good News certainly touches on the subject. She writes:

“At first, the idea of being quarantined from my family and friends for an undetermined amount of time was both frightening and sad. In addition, not being allowed to come to work at Ascension left me feeling disconnected from the work I have come to love. Since working at Ascension, I had two major surgeries: a ruptured gallbladder and a total hip replacement. Neither one of those surgeries kept me out of the office for more than one week! So I pondered how I would function without my daily connection at work, the togetherness I enjoy with my family and the camaraderie of my many friends.

The first week of isolation was dark and filled with fear of the unknown. The news reports were ominous. How would life go on? Would I and those I love survive? Could we get through this? However, I learned that we humans have an amazing gift of adapting to new and unfamiliar territory. Slowly the new normal began to emerge.

I would normally be running through the door from Ascension to get ready for an evening real estate appointment and put together some sort of quick dinner in record time. Now I am home to make 3 squares a day for my family! Good grief – is that me? I started to notice that my son wanders into the kitchen more often to talk to my husband and me. We eat dinner together every night because everyone’s schedule is suddenly the same. We taught my in-laws how to use Facetime and we call them from the dinner table so we can eat together. My sister and I check in with each other every morning to see if everyone is feeling ok, instead of leaving each other voicemails from the car. My friends hold weekly Zoom “get-togethers” and even did a virtual painting class, too (wine included)! And Fr. Bill and I have found that we can always reach each other to brainstorm new ideas and get our work done quite well. The fact that so many of our Ascension pals can even partake in a Zoom meeting is an amazing “Quarantine Bonus”! For this I am grateful.

Part of my daily routine is that I walk for exercise around my neighborhood. It is a mostly quiet neighborhood with people busy doing something outside. They might be planting, painting or washing a car but they have always been oblivious to me as I walk by. Gradually they began to notice me and offer a smile, a wave and even a “hello, stay safe” through a face mask. I actually met neighbors that I have never known despite having lived here 17 years! My son joins me on my walks now and each day I get to know more things about him. We have serious, deep conversations and silly, fun ones too. My husband and I watch movies together and my son makes popcorn! For this I am grateful.

So until we are all together again, I pray that all of you find some things to be grateful for too.”

Liina writes:

“Going to Zoom meeting I don’t have to worry about allowing enough time to there on time -- I am already there. Yesterday, I was able join you for the Zoom Bible study immediately after my Zoom ballet class – didn’t even have to shower beforehand!”

Save the Date Reminders and Announcements:

As announced by Bishop Dietsche congregations will not be meeting in the churches until July 1.

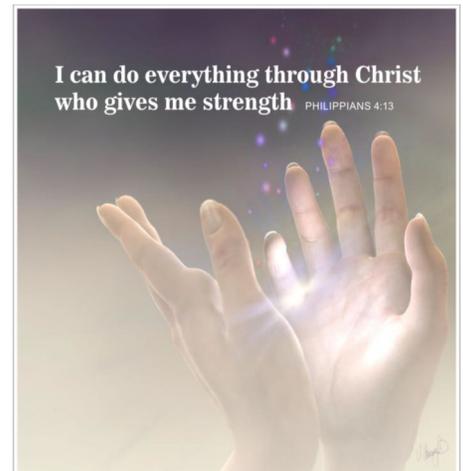
We will continue with Morning Prayer and Sunday Church Services at Ascension on Facebook for at least the duration of the time that churches are closed to congregations. Please join with Fr Bill and Cindy McCloskey at 9:30am weekdays, and 10:00am on Sundays.

ZOOM at Ascension

Bible Study with Fr Bill is now meeting weekly on Wednesdays at 2:00pm.

Also on Sundays at 11:00 am after the Eucharist Service we are holding a virtual coffee hour on Zoom.

Please notify Liz via email if you want to attend these events. Zoom assigns a new http address, meeting ID and password every week, so you will need the current information from Liz.



Can you lead Morning Prayer on Facebook?

Want to be added to the rotation of Officiants? All you need to lead is a computer with access to the internet and Cindy or Fr. Bill can train you how to do it. If you are interest please email Liz (admin@ascensionsi.org), Cindy (macat757@aol.com), or Fr. Bill (wbaker@vts.edu).

Snug Harbor Testing Site Now Open

Snug Harbor coronavirus test site now open to the general public, even people who are asymptomatic. The test site is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Appointments can be made by calling 888-ONE-MED1.

Our Pledges

While we realize that all our minds are preoccupied with the uncertainty that the Coronavirus and what it means might bring, please keep in mind that in order for there to be a church for us to return to when this period is over, we must continue to pay our bills. Please consider dropping your pledge in the mail to us.

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