



CHRIST CHURCH

1415 Pelhamdale Avenue
Pelham, New York 10803

Telephone (914) 738-5515
Facsimile (914) 712-0526

The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead
Rector

The Rector's Chronicle

February 27, 2017

Dear friends in Christ,

The heart of the Christian year is Holy Week and Easter. We celebrate the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in dramatic fashion. The Church offers the holy season of Lent as a means of preparation and penance before Holy Week. In this Chronicle I want to examine a few spiritual exercises that you might consider taking up during Lent. These are the sort of sacred calisthenics that need not be limited to Lent, and I have found in my life that they keep me faithful and fit for the service of the Lord throughout the entire year. With that in mind, I invite you to consider one or more of these practices in Lent, perhaps with the intention of continuing into Eastertide and beyond.

LENT AS A TIME FOR SACRAMENTAL RECONCILIATION

Ash Wednesday – March 1 this year – is the first day of Lent. The day before Ash Wednesday is called Shrove Tuesday – the word “shrove” comes from a now obscure word “shrive” which means absolve or confess one’s sins. Christians traditionally begin Lent by making a Confession of Sin. The Ash Wednesday liturgy includes a Litany of Penance (pp. 267 of the Book of Common Prayer) which accomplishes this in a general way, and I urge that you take time, especially if you are not able to be in church on Ash Wednesday, to pray this Litany.

I also recommend going the extra mile and making a Sacramental Confession at some point during Lent. This spiritual exercise is available in the Book of Common Prayer under the heading “Reconciliation of a Penitent” (pp. 447) and our prayer book provides two forms so that a personal confession can be made to a priest or spiritual director. My own practice is to make a confession several times a year – usually during Advent and Lent. I make an appointment with a priest, I examine my conscience beforehand, I tell the priest all of the sins which have been troubling me, and then I receive counsel, direction, and absolution. The act of naming out loud those specific sins that weigh me down and opening myself up to the counsel

and direction of a priest ensures that I actually have to confront the things that separate me from God or my neighbor.

If you want me to hear your confession, please make an appointment with me. If you would prefer the anonymity of another priest, you can always make an appointment with one of the other Episcopal priests in our diocese – we all hear confessions.

A BIT OF SHROVE TUESDAY TRIVIA AND THE LENTEN FAST

There are a few interesting customs associated with Shrove Tuesday. The custom of eating pancakes and consuming alcohol in sometimes alarming quantities is linked to a European custom of abstaining from alcohol, eggs, and fat during Lent. “Fat Tuesday” (or *Mardi Gras* in French) marked the time when Christians consumed all of the alcohol, eggs, and fat in their pantries. Chickens probably don’t know it is Lent, and so one might wonder what happened to all of those eggs that weren’t being eaten. One solution is to boil them, decorate them, and hide them until Easter: thus is the origin of the Easter Egg. The Lenten abstention of alcohol also affected the brew master. Beers that are now called Bocks or Doppelbocks were traditionally brewed in Lent and tapped on Easter. Those beers were dubbed “Salvator” or “Savior” beers – today any beer that ends in “-ator” is made in the style of those Easter beers. Often, lost in all the food and drink, is that in reality, these practices were initially ways of preparing the pantry for a Lenten Fast. What is the easiest way to make sure don’t drink or eat certain things? Make sure they aren’t in your cupboard.

The Book of Common Prayer (pg. 17) notes that Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Lent and Holy Week, and all Fridays (except those that are Holy Days or in Eastertide) are to be “observed by special acts of discipline and self denial.” The Prayer Book also notes that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are “Fast” days. My own custom is to fast (no food) all day on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. I do eat a little after the sun has set and all worship services have concluded. I also abstain from eating any meat on Fridays in Lent.

A special act of discipline or self denial throughout Lent can serve as a very intentional way of preparing for Easter. It parallels the fasting that Jesus did for forty days in the wilderness at the start of his ministry, and it also can serve as a reminder of our Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross. I invite you to find something that makes sense and will help you prepare for Easter and keep Christ on your mind.

PRAYER IN LENT

Most fasts end at Easter, but a healthy regiment of prayer and reflection on the Holy Scripture ought to be a feature of every Christian’s life. I have found that I need to program regular prayer and reading of the Scriptures into my calendar. In addition to our normal Sunday worship services, our parish offers Morning Prayer on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and we celebrate the Holy Eucharist each week on Thursday and on major Holy Days. That schedule is partly for my own benefit – it ensures that on five out of seven days of the week a

part of my day is set aside for regular prayer and that I am inspired by or forced to grapple with Biblical texts. Normally two to six of us gather for Morning Prayer. The celebrations of the Eucharist tend to draw between five and fifteen people.

This Lent, if your schedule allows, I encourage you to come to one of our regular prayer or worship services. Christ Church will offer two additional services throughout Lent. On Tuesdays, Evening Prayer will be said at 7:00 p.m. in the Bolton Chapel. On Sundays at 9:15 a.m. Stations of the Cross will be said in the Church. If you are interested in joining our Rota of leaders at Morning Prayer please let me know. If you are willing and able regularly to lead Morning, Midday, or Evening Prayer on a day or at a time that we do not currently offer it, please let me know.

Our weekly [worship schedule for Lent](#) is enclosed in this letter. Put it on your fridge. The reverse of that page is a [detailed schedule of Holy Week](#), when April arrives, turn the sheet over and keep it on your fridge.

PROGRAMMING PASTORAL CARE

Deacon Katie and I have been working together to expand the Pastoral Care ministry at Christ Church. On the Last Sunday after the Epiphany (February 26), Deacon Katie held a meeting of all who were interested in joining the Pastoral Care Committee. That meeting outlined several ongoing – but not always known in advance – pastoral needs that our parishioners have.

When parishioners are in need (in the hospital or a rehabilitation facility for an extended period of time, recently home from the hospital, grieving the death of a loved one, recovering from illness, etc.) basic signs of support from the Church are looked-for and greatly appreciated. Deacon Katie, Marie Main, and I are able to organize people who can provide meals, flowers, Eucharistic visits, and even grocery shopping at those times when the need arises. These are great ways that the members of the Body of Christ can minister one to another. Similarly, some of our parishioners occasionally need rides to church or to doctor's appointments, and we can organize a driver from our list of willing and able parishioners for the task.

There are two components to “willing and able”. People tend not to plan for the unexpected, and so those who are part of this branch of our Pastoral Care ministry need to be *willing* to act when mobilized. A larger pool of people involved means that the likelihood is higher that at least one or two people will be *able* to respond to a request.

Our Pastoral Care Ministry is also building a prayer chain – people who are willing to pray for a specific need or petition or even the entire parish prayer list during the week. Starting this week, the entire prayer list will be prayed at Morning and Evening Prayer, in addition to when it is read on Sundays and Holy Days.

Frankly, I hope every member of our parish is able to be a part of our pastoral care ministry. I understand that some people have very busy schedules, and perhaps those people

might only be able to offer prayers or order flowers online. They may seem like small things, but as the Anglican poet and priest George Herbert wrote, “Nothing is little in God’s service.”

If you were not able to be at the meeting of the Pastoral Care Committee, but you wish to be involved in some way, please email Marie Main to add your name to the list. Please provide your name, email address, cell number, and any/all of the ministries you want to be involved in: “Provide Food”, “Provide Flowers”, “Eucharistic Visitor”, “Driver”, or “Prayer Chain”.

CLOSING LENT WITH THE GREAT LITURGIES OF HOLY WEEK

Holy Week marks the transition from Lent into Easter. Holy Week is my favorite week of the church year. The liturgical celebrations are ancient and rich in detail and content. The Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the heart of all of what we do as Christians. This year, I want you to take special notice of the reading of the Passion. On Palm Sunday we play roles, and we will read Saint Matthew’s account of Jesus’ Passion. On Good Friday the choir chants the Passion from Saint John’s Gospel. I am grateful to be part of a parish that does it both ways, and I encourage you to be present in church for the Passion on at least one occasion, both if your schedule allows.

This year we will have a guest preacher for the Easter Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil). I am happy to announce that the Rev. Andrew C. Mead, Rector Emeritus of Saint Thomas Church, New York City will be with us. He is my dad, he is an accomplished preacher, and it is an honor to have him with us this year for the Triduum.

Enclosed in this letter are schedules for the services of [Lent](#) and [Holy Week](#). Put the schedule on your fridge. For those who wonder why we do what we do in church, I have enclosed an updated version of [Liturgical Notes for Lent & Holy Week](#).

Have a holy and fruitful Lent. I leave you with the collect for the first Saturday of Lent: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us your gifts of holy discipline, in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of your most gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In Christ and with fondest affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Hossie Mead". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Reverend Matthew Hossie Mead, Rector