

# The Epistle



## ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards, Bishop

The Rev. Kirk A. Woodliff, Rector

The Rev. Chip Arnold,  
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The Rev. Sherryl Netzler,  
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The Rev. Mike Margerum, Deacon

The Rev. Linda Smith, Deacon

The Rev. Hal Woomer, Transitional Deacon

## January 2016

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### WHO ARE WE?

We, as St. Paul's, are a theologically diverse community who seeks to embrace our diversity in order to live through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be a place of belonging for all people.

## January Worship Schedule

**Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>** Only **one service** on this day

10:00 a.m. Epiphany Play

**NO** 5:00 p.m. service

**Jan 10<sup>th</sup>** 10:00 a.m. One morning service

5:00 p.m. Holy Communion

**Jan 17<sup>th</sup>** 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Jan 24<sup>th</sup>** 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Jan 31<sup>st</sup>** Only **one service** on this day

10:00 a.m. Annual Meeting and Worship

**NO** 5:00 p.m. service

## From the Pile on Fr. Kirk's Desk...



**What is the VESTRY and why might I want to serve on it?**

**Definition: *The vestry is the legal representative of the parish with regard to all matters pertaining to its corporate property. The basic responsibilities of the vestry are to help define and articulate the mission of the congregation; to support the church's mission by word and deed, to select the rector, to ensure effective organization and planning, and to manage resources and finances.***

As you can see, there is both a "Business" side and a "Mission" side of the vestry. Both sides are very important and require people who have gifts to balance both sides. Many rectors, like myself, do not have a business degree, or come into the ordained ministry with the working knowledge of running a business. A vestry needs leaders who understand business in the modern culture.

A vestry needs people who have a relationship with God that will allow them to see beyond what church once was and provide new ideas and vision for living the mission of the church here and now and in the future.

Not everyone on the vestry will have gifts in both the "Business" side and the "Mission" side of things. If you do, it's a bonus. A vestry also needs both vision people and doers, as well as dreamers and the concrete practical thinkers.

Though our regular vestry meeting is held on the second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m., serving on the vestry is much more than one meeting a month. I don't mean to imply that serving the vestry is like taking on another full time job, however to know the church you are serving requires the vestry member to know the parish, which requires participation in order to build the relationships necessary to guide St. Paul's into its mission.

The requirements to serve on vestry are:

- Must have been Confirmed or Received into the Episcopal Church.
- Must be a pledging member of St. Paul's.
- Must have a desire to serve and not do it out of a sense of obligation.
- Must be able to attend the regular monthly meeting on the second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.
- Not a disqualifier, but vestry members need to use email and check it once a day.

We need four people this year; three for a three year term and one for a one year term. Elections will be during our combined 10:00 a.m. worship and annual meeting on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

I ask that you pray about it and contact our Sr. Warden, Barb Monroy, if you have questions, or if you feel called to serve. [Bmonroy0216@gmail.com](mailto:Bmonroy0216@gmail.com) or 775-742-4856

Peace,



## Monthly Receipt Summary



### St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Sparks Funding the Mission December 2015

This is the final Epistle Report for the 2015 year. We have regular offerings, Christmas offering, and many year-end things to account for. A report about being on track really isn't useful here, and the complete report will be on the bulletin board soon, and a full years report at the annual meeting.

Our stewardship program is basically over, and we have received 98 pledges to date. If you have not made a pledge yet, it isn't too late and it is so important to our final steps in the budget process.

The monthly Financial Statement of Mission contains detail on all our financial activity, and is posted in the narthex. You can direct questions to any Vestry member, Dick Stuffelbeam, or Patti Stine. (Email: [dick@stpaulssparks.org](mailto:dick@stpaulssparks.org))

**AN IMPORTANT NOTE:** By all your gifts, we are blessed. For all your gifts we are grateful.

## Angel Tree

Thank you St. Paul's for showing how generous we were with all the Angel Tree Toys and Gifts for the youth in our community. And also new for us this year was the Silver Senior Gift Tags. The Salvation Army very much appreciated the gifts to the seniors of our community as well. Thanks again.

Barbara Papadakos

## Annual Parish Meeting

January 31<sup>st</sup> 10:00 a.m.

On Sunday, January 31st we will have our annual parish meeting during a combined 10:00 a.m. worship service. Since every member is **HIGHLY** encouraged and/or expected to attend this meeting there will not be a 5:00 p.m. service on this Sunday.

## The Daughters of the King

Are you not quite sure who The Daughters of the King are and what it is they do? Contact Margaret Bouzek at [Margaret.Bouzek@va.gov](mailto:Margaret.Bouzek@va.gov) or by phone at (775) 424-3767.



## Outreach Report



December was a big month for the Food Pantry with donations totaling \$1,025.00. Prayers and Squares held their annual Christmas sale of handmade items. It was a huge success with a total of \$608.00 collected to help purchase material and other supplies for their quilt ministry. Other donations for the month included \$20.00 to Prayers and Squares, \$50.00 to the Reno Rodeo Denim Drive, \$77.00 to the Clergy Discretionary Fund, and \$50.00 to Youth Ministries.

Patti Stine, Outreach Committee

## St. Paul's Parish Survey

St. Paul's Vestry conducted this survey during Advent to evaluate our ministries and learn how we can become an even more vibrant faith community. We are encouraged that about 100 members filled out the survey! We are currently evaluating the responses and will share results soon, including in next month's Epistle.

## NO Pinterest Interest Group

See you on February 1<sup>st</sup>... we are *Pinterest* taking January off. Happy New Year.

## Lectio Divina Bible Study

Come and join us in the parish hall for this Holy Spirit guided study of scripture. (no homework required ☺)

### Combined Men's and Women's Group

Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

### Men's Group

This group is starting up again. So join us Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Contact Rev. Mike Margerum for more information or about setting up a new group, mgoodmarge@gmail.com or 775-229-2695

## End of Life Planning Seminar

Join us for an end of life legacy planning seminar being held in the Parish Hall on Sunday, January 10 at 11:30 am following a combined worship service. Gary Fuller, Esq., will give an overview of **estate planning and health care advanced directives**. There will be handouts available for **funeral planning** and recording important biographical information.

This seminar will also be a chance to learn about the Society of the Magi. This Society was created by the Diocese of Nevada as a way to recognize those individuals who have chosen to remember their church in their estate planning. Members have made these gifts or bequests as a way to commit to a deeper understanding of stewardship. Members are never asked for the size of their gift and may remain completely anonymous.

## January in the Food Pantry



**“Let's Pamper & Hug the baby!”**

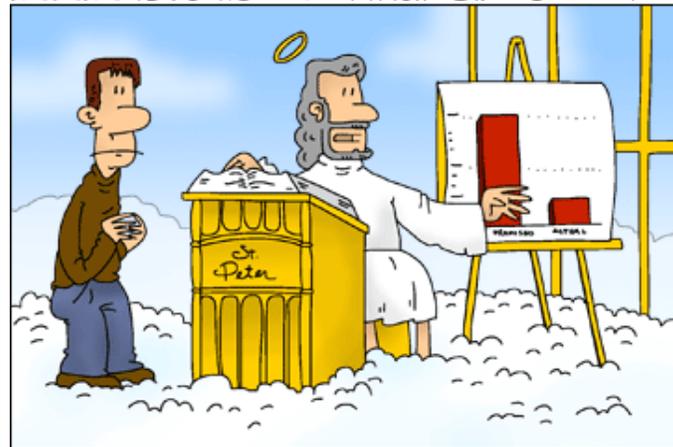
Diapers & wipes!!!

## EYC Collecting Donations for “Blessing Bags”

The EYC (Episcopal Youth Community) will once again be collecting items for “Blessing Bags” and we need your help! A blessing bag is a Ziplock bag stocked with food, toiletries, and other items one might need while living on the street. The youth will distribute the bags to people in need in downtown Reno. Please bring your donations to the church by **Sunday, January 31**. These items can be from hotels or other travel sized items. The point is for them to fit into a gallon sized Ziplock bag.

Here are some ideas of items that can be donated: Brand new tube socks, gallon sized Ziplock bags, soft granola bars, soft cereal bars, snack crackers, peanut butter, beef jerky, raisins, applesauce cups/pouches, juice boxes, trail mix, gum, bottled water, pop top meat or sausages, hand sanitizer, baby wipes, toothbrush/toothpaste, wash cloth, soap, shampoo, lotion, comb, nail clippers, deodorant, socks, chapstick and travel sized tissues.

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06-29-2015

IN THIS CHART WE CAN SEE YOUR PROMISED GOOD DEEDS COMPARED TO YOUR ACTUAL FOLLOW THROUGH

## Youth Group: EYC



EYC is an Episcopal Youth Community where all youth (and their friends) who are in grades 6-12 are invited to come and participate. The focus will be different each week, but you can count on whatever the EYC is doing it will stimulate our growth with God and with each other, and our growth in serving Christ in the world. We invite you to come join us for food, fellowship and fun! If you are new to St. Paul's we welcome you to join us. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia Woodliff at [triciawoodliff@hotmail.com](mailto:triciawoodliff@hotmail.com) or Tia or Jon Mittelstadt at 775-722-3469 or by email at [tia.mittel@gmail.com](mailto:tia.mittel@gmail.com).

EYC will meet in the youth room from 10:15 AM until 12:15 PM unless listed differently in the schedule. Please join us for the following activities:

**January 3:** No Meeting- Happy New Year- Epiphany Play is Today!

**January 10:** Growing with God- Lunch and Discussion

Meet in youth room after the 10:00 service from 11:15 AM to 1:15 PM. We will eat lunch, watch a video and discuss. Games to follow! 6th graders are welcome to attend.

**January 17:** Martin Luther King Video

Meet in the youth room at 10:15 AM. We will watch an interview of Martin Luther King and learn about how his faith gave him courage to lead the fight for civil rights. Lunch will be served. 6th graders are welcome to attend.

**January 24:** EZ Tag Indoor Laser Tag

Meet in the youth room at 10:15 AM. We will then carpool to the EZ Tag facility to play 2 games. Please bring \$7 to help cover the cost of this event. We will return to the church and eat lunch. We should be done by 12:30 pm. **6<sup>th</sup> graders are welcome to attend this meeting.**

**January 31:** Minute to Win It

Meet in youth room. We will eat lunch and participate in some fun "Minute to Win It" games. Prizes will be awarded. **6<sup>th</sup> graders are welcome to attend this meeting.**

## Recovery Groups at St. Paul's

Mondays: AA Meeting @ 5:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: Women's AA @ 6:30 p.m.

Thursdays: Gama-Non Meeting @ 6:30 p.m.

and Ala-Non Meeting @ 6:00 p.m.

## Need Baked Goods

### for a Special Party? Meeting? Birthday?



Sally Sue's Bakery is run by our very own Sarah and Hayley Lightfoot. ALL proceeds go to St. Paul's Church. For orders and questions call Sarah or Hayley 626-8519. Visit the website for a pricelist and pictures of their past works. Check out Sally Sue's Bakery at [www.sarahlightfoot.blogspot.com](http://www.sarahlightfoot.blogspot.com)

## Prayers of the People

Please help us keep our Prayer Chain List up to date. Let someone in the Prayer Chain Group or Robin in the office know each month if we are to continue to pray for your special people. Thank you.



**Prayer Requests**

Forrest, Diane, Russ, Pat, Barbara, Larry, Anne, Philip, Nanette, Preston, Jameson Walker, Karen, Sven, Gracie, Jaemie, Fiona, Robert, Bill, Trudy, Lori, Dick, Keith, Brett, Ella,

Diana, Curt, Patricia, Sophia, Paul, Eileen, Mary, Connie, Steve, Trisha, Sarah, Jerilyn & family, baby Naomi Joy & family, Bev, Sixten, Mike, Lisa, Joe, Marge, Evelyn, Wendy, Scott, Janelle, Linda's family, Jane, Victoria, Shannon, Theresa, Graham, Ryan, Amanda, Cathy, Mara, Stan, Bobbie, Lorraine, Sharon, Jaime, Rev. Ken, Gene, Sofia, Bill & family, Jan, Emma, Holly, Rita, Adrienne, Eric, Sarah.

Military: Andrew, Ryan, Jeffrey, Sierra, Owen, Brian, Jordan, Evanne, Carl, Alex & Suzanne.

## We Are Thankful...

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Matt 2:10-11a*

Watch this space in the Epistle each month for stories of gratitude and belonging. This month we are thankful **Tia Mittelstadt** shares her reflections with us.



**How long have you attended St. Paul's?**  
We have been attending St. Paul's for a little over 3 years.

**What about St. Paul's makes it a church home for you?**  
The people. Everyone has been friendly and welcoming to us from the beginning. I'm glad to have made lifelong friends.

**How have you experienced God's generosity in your life? In your church?**  
I feel blessed to be the mom of two wonderful boys who bring a lot of joy to my life. They are a gift from God along with my wonderful and supportive husband. I feel blessed to be a member of St. Paul's and glad we found this church. We searched for a long time and feel at home at St. Paul's.

## What is one thing about St. Paul's you are most thankful for?

I am thankful that we welcome everyone and don't make judgements! Everyone belongs at the table and belongs to God. I enjoy the combination of the praise band and liturgy at the contemporary worship service.

## Please share a favorite story about your time at St. Paul's and/or tell a little about one of your favorite church activities.

I enjoy the Pinterest Interest group each month. It is a great creative outlet. It has been wonderful to get to know some of the ladies in the church while eating yummy food and making fun crafts!

The Gilligan's Island party a couple of years ago was also really fun and memorable- thanks Linda and Jody!

Thanks for sharing your faith story with us Tia!

## St. Paul's Prayers & Squares



The "Prayers and Squares" ministry is a special "outreach" tool to share the love of Christ. The quilts bring a tangible example of the love we all share with

those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. You do not have to know how to sew, or like to sew, but can also just join us for the fellowship we all share.

We meet on the second Saturday of each month in the Parish Hall from 9 A.M. to noon.

We gladly receive donations of materials, thread, etc. and cash to purchase necessary supplies.

If you would like to join us, or if you would like to request a quilt for someone, please contact Victoria Sidener 322-2375.

## 2016 Vestry Nomination

**Name: Daniel Villanueva**

**What is your current level of participation in the life of St. Paul's and what ministries are you currently involved in, both at St. Paul's and out in the world?**

*Aside from attending (most often) the 11 AM service and maintaining stewardship pledges, I'm a lector and attend Rector's Book Discussions, Advent and Lenten studies and soup evenings, Stations of the Cross, the summer Aces game, etc. Were it not for my work schedule at the UNR Honors Program, I would love to do Lectio Divina as well. Still, as part of my job, I have been able to encourage several Honors students to volunteer at the Community Food Pantry. In the community, I am strongly drawn to social justice issues and have participated with Nevadans for the Common Good, local groups fighting human trafficking, and with the Northern Nevada International Center's efforts to assist refugees fleeing terror.*

**Have you ever served on a parish Vestry or similar church board? If so, did you serve in a particular capacity?**

*Until moving to Reno in 2012, I served on the Vestry at The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany (Henderson, NV), specifically as Evangelism chair. That included general community outreach as well as shared responsibility for designing brochures, our website, and regular posts on social media, all to help bring inquirers into a deeper interest in our faith community. It also involved event planning for our members*

*and the wider community such as a speaker series, wine tastings, formation evenings, and facilitating Vestry workshops to develop a strategic vision and pursue long-range planning for Epiphany.*

**Why do you feel drawn to serve on St. Paul's Vestry?**

*The main reason is a strong desire to give back broadly - beyond assisting in specific ministries - to the church that has made me feel at home since my first visit nearly four years ago. I would like to help share hospitality and relationship with newcomers as well as members of many years who might feel on the margins of church life at St. Paul's. I also hope to contribute experiences gained as an active participant in evangelism at Epiphany - as well as my story as a convert from the Roman Catholic faith - to the mission and ministries of my "not-so-new-anymore" church home.*

**The Vestry needs both "visionaries" and "doers". Where would you fit into this mix and what do you perceive as your gifts for ministry?**

*I would define myself mainly as a "doer." My most successful service has definitely been helping to organize and encourage fellow team members to join in achieving shared goals. That said, a little "visionary" can't help but slip in because I also enjoy the creative challenge of imagining new approaches to ministry or outreach. I feel my gifts for ministry include the ability to find ways to create connections between people, to share my faith with others, and to contribute to the liturgical elements of corporate worship.*

**How do you currently see St. Paul's living into the mission of Christ?**

*St. Paul's is a great example of a diverse faith community whose members live in relationship with one another and encourage the wider community to join in that relationship by example. There are so many ministries our members are involved in to address community needs – from the food bank to prison ministry to Empty Bowls, Angel Tree and more – that help heal the hurting and share the God's love with others. Likewise, the many activities which minister to the needs of our own members help us grow closer as a congregation (and as a German professor, I particularly love that St. Paul's puts on a yearly Oktoberfest!) Mirroring the diversity of the body of Christ, we are also distinctive in our membership profile, worship styles, and ministry focus areas among other Episcopal congregations in Reno-Sparks, which allows us to add to, not duplicate, the outreach potential of our congregation with others.*

**Where do you see St. Paul's in three years?**

*In three years, St. Paul's will have sustained its core ministries and encouraged our members to step out even more into the community to partner with similarly-minded congregations and organizations to share our individual gifts and vibrant, diverse church life. If community needs change, the ministry infrastructure of St. Paul's will be flexible enough to adapt to and address other spiritual and material concerns. Those who are drawn to St. Paul's by our example will find a warm welcome at our services,*

*social, and spiritual events, and find something about our lived faith that appeals to them and reaches them where they are. Internally, members will strengthen our commitment to active stewardship to support our shared activities, avoiding fear of lack of resources to carry Christ into the world.*



THE WISE MEN, BEING WISE, GOT ALL OF THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE WEEKS BEFORE THE RUSH



(See Luke 2:1-16)  
YOU KNOW GUYS, RUMOR HAS IT THE BABY SHIVERS IN THE COLD ... MAYBE INSTEAD OF GOLD AND PERFUME HE WOULD ENJOY A BLANKET?

## Bishop Dan's 20th EPISTLE TO THE NEVADANS



### Terrorism and an Evangelism of Reconciliation

*Things fall apart*

*The centre cannot hold*

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*

*The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere*

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned.*

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst*

*Are full of passionate intensity.*

-- *William Butler Yeats*

It is a dark time. I awoke early this morning, while it was still dark, at the hour when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb (John 20: 1), and looked out across the Atlantic. The moon was shining a stream of light across the water, and directly above it was the loveliest Morning Star I have ever seen. It could have been the Star of Bethlehem floating there in the Eastern sky. "For we saw his star in the East and we have come to worship him." (Matthew 2: 2)

It is a dark time and I am looking for that star. I do not need to tell you of the darkness. San Bernardino. Colorado Springs. Paris. Charleston. Random violence stirs our fear and in panic we race into racism, xenophobia, religious prejudice, all expressed in violent ways to defend ourselves from "them." "Their" violence prompts "our" violence to which "they" respond with more violence. My vague pronouns reflect the fact that the violent actors in my list of cities were Muslims, Christians, and white racists, but those are just a few of the possible categories of "others" who fear "us" and prompt "us" to respond in kind, however that "us" may be defined.

Violent religious intolerance has surged since the end of the Cold War.[i] We focus on Fundamentalist Islamic violence some of which affects Americans and Europeans, though most of it is directed against Non-Fundamentalist Muslims. But we also see Hindu violence against Sikhs and Muslims in India, Buddhist violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and Israel's treatment of Muslims and Christians is often regrettable. Of course Israel is acting out of fear. We are all acting out of fear. It is fear that drives the Liberty University President to urge a crowd of cheering undergraduate Fundamentalists to gun up so "we can end those Muslims." [ii] Racist genocidal fanaticism? Yes, plus a blasphemous distortion of the Christian faith just as ISIS is a blasphemous distortion of the Islamic faith. But that's just name-calling. It doesn't analyze what is happening on all fronts. And it doesn't lead to reconciliation or advance the Kingdom of God.

So I want to start with this question: what's really going on here? We can blame it on a sect of Islamic Fundamentalists, and certainly there is a whole truckload of truth in that. But what about the Planned Parenthood attack in Colorado Springs? What about the racist shootings at Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston? For that matter, what about the mass shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon or Sandy Hook or Columbine or the Amish school shooting? Of course there are differences -but if they are completely different, how come they look so much alike? Is a murder

somehow more ideological if the ideology is Islam than if its white supremacy, nihilism, or ironically a pro-life mass murder? Is there a common thread running through all this violence?

### ***The Sources of Religious Violence***

Four books have shaped my view of religious violence.

Fields of Blood: Religion And The History Of Violence by Karen Armstrong.

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided By Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt

The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming The Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age by Martha Nussbaum (a Jewish author, but I found this book in a jihadist-leaning Palestinian bookstore in East Jerusalem)

Not In God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence by Jonathan Sacks.

The Powers That Be: Theology For A New Millennium by my late hero Walter Wink.

From those wise writers, I have learned the following things we need to remember if we are to have any hope of stemming "this blood dimmed tide:

**1. *The causes of violence are complex.*** Religion (ours or theirs) is not the primary cause. The vast majority of conflict in the world has not been about religion. It has been about power and wealth. Even the so-called "Wars Of Religion" in the 16th Century saw Protestants and Catholics on the same side from foot soldiers up to monarchs on one side against Protestants and Catholics on the other. Even the so-called "Wars of Religion" were about state autonomy versus empire. But religion has often been enlisted in the fights, and we religious folks have all too often joined right in to drum up support for the powers that be to wage war, persecute minorities, and perpetrate violence for their non-religious ends. Religious folks have historically been prime dupes. Our hands are not clean but I believe historian Karen Armstrong would say that there are propagandizers and manipulators behind the trigger pullers. To find them, half the moral is "follow the money." The other half is "follow the power." Note: it isn't just about the trigger puller. It isn't even just about the jihadist figurehead. We have congratulated ourselves on killing Osama Bin Laden, Nasr Ibn Ali al-Ansi (Al-Qaeda), Abu Sayyaf (ISIS Syria), Abu Nabil (ISIS Libya), Abdirhman Sadhere (Al-Shabab), etc. But terrorism increases after our victorious coups. Why is that? As Bob Dylan said, "The executioner's face is always well hidden."

**2. *We are groupish.*** This goes back to Darwin, who did not say we are selfish. In *The Descent of Man*, he explained how survival depends on cooperation. As a result our DNA is wired through millennia of evolution to be altruistic, even sacrificial, within our group; but aggressive and destructive to people outside our group. Interestingly, the rise of cities led to broadening the definition of the in-group to include more people. Trade with far off peoples broadened it further still. In both cases, religion was the social mechanism that extended trust and caring farther out into the human species. Religion's basic function is the opposite of war mongering and violence. It establishes the basis for trust and cooperation.

**3. *Altruistic evil is the child of pathological dualism***<sup>[iii]</sup>. "Dualism" is the belief that the universe is a battleground between ultimate good and ultimate evil. This runs against the grain of monotheism, the Jewish-Christian-Islamic believe that we have one source, one destiny, one meaning; so evil is never ultimate. When bad things happen, when we suffer, we are tempted toward "pathological dualism" in which we blame some "other," demonize some "other," regard ourselves as victims whose victim status means we are not only innocent but entitled to unleash all our destructive hatred on the "other." Pathological dualism reduces people from the status as persons responsible for their own lives to victims, passively blaming "others." It licenses "altruistic evil," horrors committed for ostensibly good and noble causes. Finally, altruistic evil discredits the very religions that are our best hope for a peaceful and just world order. The prototype of pathological evil is "the good guy with a gun against the bad guy with a gun." The practical problem with that picture is that each gunmen thinks he is the good guy. From the religious perspective, that is the rhetoric of a heresy repudiated by the Church since the first Century, by Judaism since the 4th Century BCE, and by Islam thereafter in a medieval controversy with dualists in Iran. It is a persistent heresy, manifesting in Judaism at Qumran, in Christianity with the Gnostics, and in Islam in medieval Iran; but it is not now, has never been, and never will be the teaching of any monotheistic faith. We repudiate this heresy because it makes people smaller, meaner, and blinder.

**4. *The myth of redemptive violence*** - not the orthodox teaching of any religion - is the prevailing moral assumption of the world. It is what Paul meant by the spiritual power "of this present age." It is drummed into us through movies, TV, internet, journalism, and all non-religious voices; so it is not surprising that some religious leaders have been led astray and proclaim the myth of redemptive violence as Christianity, though it runs 180 degrees opposite to the teachings of Jesus. The symbol of the myth of redemptive violence is the good guy with a gun shooting down the bad guy with a gun. The myth rooted in dualism says the evil people oppress the good people until a good hero rises up and slays the bad people - and we all rejoice because we love aggression and just need a moral pretext of victimhood to set free our baser nature. Walter Wink traces that destructive thirst for vengeance elevated to a moral principle back to the ancient Sumerian creation myth in The Enuma Elish. He shows that the Biblical creation story is written to repudiate the myth of redemptive violence and that Jesus mission and ministry were completely devoted to overcoming that false and bloody creed with peace and justice. His death on the cross was a paradoxical defeat of violence with love vindicated by the Resurrection. But, notwithstanding the teachings of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other world religions, the vast majority of us still place our faith not in the Prince of Peace, but the myth of redemptive violence.

**5. *Violence arises from a failure of empathy/ participatory imagination.*** Rabbi Sacks offers a cogent analysis of sibling rivalry in Genesis because, following Rene Girard, he regards sibling rivalry as the primal "genesis" of our violence. Regardless of the source of violence, he shows that in Genesis hatred is vanquished and violence allayed by seeing oneself in the other's shoes. He tells the story of a rising star in a neo-fascist party who was shocked to discover he was a Jew. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum writes of how fear blocks our capacity for "participatory imagination," the ability to see the world through another's eyes. This loss makes our world smaller and leads us to turn "others" into something less than human, in fact to make them screens for the projection of all our worst impulses and imaginings.

**6. We cannot live without meaning and identity.** In my book, this is the most important point. No human society has ever lasted without a religion or some ideology that took on ultimate significance (Fascism, Communism, etc.) Religion makes meaning out of life. We find our identity through belonging to a community, especially a faith community, people who find meaning not just in the same way but together. Sacks and Haidt agree that our Western culture, which is spreading through globalization, is devoid of meaning and its universalism threatens our sense of identity. Terrorism and mass violence are cries of protest against that vapid shallow imitation of life. Jihadists and nihilistic white teenagers alike have "Imagine(d) there's no heaven . . . . nothing to kill or die for . . . . imagine(d) all the people living or today" and cried NOOOOO!!!! Sacks says that the joining of a cause and dying for that cause gives the existentially desperate person a brief but ultimately meaning-making identity. And we respond to terrorism by splitting into extremes, in desperate search of a group sufficiently at odds with banal secularism that joining it will give us an identity. Hence,

***The centre cannot hold . . .***

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst*

*Are full of passionate intensity.*

### ***A Christian response to religious violence***

We begin in darkness. We probe the nature of the darkness. The darkness is the context of the Morning Star shining in the East over the choppy waters below. Christians are stargazers. Our place on this planet is to **see the star** and to **be the star** -- both at once. Jesus called us "the light of the world." (Matthew 5: 15) How shall we be the light shining in the midst of this particular darkness?

Giving the culture a meaning transfusion. We do not write laws or command armies. But laws and armies, while having their role to play, have proven ultimately unable to curb religious and ideological violence. So it is just as well that we do not write laws or command armies. Instead, we shape culture. We have abdicated that role in recent decades. But our mission is to show the world the way to a meaningful life, one in which there may be nothing to kill for but there is decidedly something worth living and dying for, and yes there is a heaven, a realm of God's justice waiting to come to earth when we are ready. The best thing we can do to counter terrorism is to infuse our society with faith, hope, and love. **We need to spread some gospel right now.**

Spreading gospel requires us to intentionally and deliberately commit to a robust campaign of non-coercive, non-manipulative, tolerant, relational, hospitable, attractive evangelism. There are specific ways to do this. People at our diocesan convention 2015 learned some of the basics. If we want to give our culture a meaning transfusion, we **must** - I truly mean must -- make the effort to learn and practice a robust evangelism. We can no longer afford to live with:

*The best lack all conviction*

But that does not mean we offer our gospel in opposition to other religious traditions. Authentic Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and the other world religions also infuse the culture with meaning and identity. They are not our enemies or competitors. They are our allies. For example, when ISIS sets out to radicalize a teenager, the first thing they try to do is separate the teen

from his mosque. They want the youth alienated, especially from orthodox Islam. The mosque provides meaning and identity, the antidotes to jihadist radicalism. If we want to prevent American teens from becoming jihadists, the best thing we can do is support our local mosque.

I attended the Parliament of the World's Religions this Fall. People from all sorts of different faiths gathered in friendship and respect. I attended multiple workshops on combatting religious violence. Our own Dr. Aslam Abdullah, a Las Vegas imam, led the best workshop. We Christians discredit ourselves when we disrespect other religious traditions. We are far more attractive (and therefore evangelistically successful) when we treat our co-religionists with respect and partner with them in acts of charity and the quest for social justice.

A society in which the religions flourish and faith communities treat each other as friends is a better place to live than the lonely atomistic individualistic cynical world we Westerners inhabit today. Such a world would not drive people to crazed violence committed in existential despair.

*A different narrative of God and a different picture of the world.* It is essential that we return a sense of meaning and identity to our culture. And it is true that different religions can work together for that essential goal. But that does not mean just any religion will do. As we have seen *dualism and the myth of redemptive violence* are at the root of religious intolerance and terrorism. Those dark doctrines do not need us - they have the largest most effective propaganda machine the world has ever known - and we do not need them.

What the world needs now is a different story, a story of peace practiced in the face of violence, of love overcoming hatred. We need Jesus - his words, his example, his living presence giving us the strength not to strike back. We need a religion true to the Genesis creation story, true to God's rejection of violence in the Flood and new creation, true to the stories of reconciliation, true to Jesus - and incidentally true to the original social function of religion to extend trust and relationality beyond the confines of our group out into the wider world.

We do not want the President of Liberty University speaking in the name of Jesus without a vigorous response from the orthodox Christians. Again, we cannot even survive if:

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

We better get ourselves some conviction right now.

*A spiritual discipline of knowing one another.* I have said we need to publicly profess our faith out loud, and that our faith must be Bible-based Jesus-centered commitment to the practice of peace in the face of violence. But how do we practice that faith? How do we propound it by word **and deed**? Not with a coercive, dogmatic, hitting people over the head with the Bible sort of encounter. The story of the New Testament is about encountering the other in a very different way. Jesus formed his band of flowers out of political and religious antagonists. They got to know Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians, Roman Centurions, rich people, poor people, sick people, sinners, crazy people, all sorts of folks. And they were themselves transformed by their encounters. That's evangelism.

The Epistles are guides to relationship for people who had regarded each other as "other" until they found themselves bound together in the Body of Christ, and they didn't know how to manage that. But they learned. They befriended one another and in time became the Church.

The story of Pentecost is about all different nations and languages gathered together hearing the gospel each in their own language. They did not all become alike. They kept their languages. They were different, but they were together.

*This is the spiritual discipline of participatory imagination*, imagining our way inside someone else's skin, seeing the world through their eyes. This discipline can be disturbing and humbling. But it enlarges our experience and makes us wiser, kinder, slower to judge, readier to lend a hand.

Such spirituality would be quite countercultural. These days we are segregating ourselves into communities that look and think alike. We watch only the news networks that will give us the facts to reinforce what we already want to think. But what if we chose instead to get to know people different from ourselves, to engage them in conversations not to straighten them out but to learn from them. What if curiosity replaced dogmatism?

If we grew the Christian faith and then practiced it - by practicing it I mean precisely this spiritual discipline of openhearted gracious relationship - that would change the world. We would not all suddenly fall into each other's arms in a love fest. But the society would not be nearly so highly conducive of the energies of fear and hatred.

Jonathan Haidt says we are biologically *wired to distrust* and think ill of people who are not in our group. But he then adds we are *not hardwired to distrust and think ill of others*. We can change our hearts and minds. But how? It does not happen through confrontation or rational argument. (This is where my friends are - I say this in love - missing the boat in berating the xenophobic, fearful, prejudiced public figures today) People change when they get to know each other. So this requires us to get acquainted with people of other faiths personally, but it also means having respectful caring encounters with our fellow Christians who are saying things we find morally repugnant.

## **Conclusion**

It is a dark time. But the dark time is when the Morning Star shines brightest. I have seen it over the Atlantic and I have seen it in the eyes of people of faith who refuse to succumb to the darkness of dualism, redemptive violence, and altruistic evil. It is a dark time, but a time in which hope is on the brink of dawning.

Blessing Always, Bishop Dan

## Coming Events



### *January 2016*

Saturday	Jan. 2, 2016	No Food Pantry today	
Saturday	Jan. 2, 2016	D.O.K.	10:00 am
Saturday	Jan. 2, 2016	Epiphany Play Dress Rehearsal	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 3, 2016	Epiphany Play & Celebration	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 3, 2016	Budget Presentation	11:15 am
Sunday	Jan. 3, 2016	<b>NO 5:00 p.m. service</b>	
Monday	Jan. 4, 2016	<b>NO</b> Pinterest Interest Group	
Saturday	Jan. 9, 2016	Prayer's & Squares	9:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 10, 2016	<b>Combined Service</b>	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 10, 2016	End of Life Planning /Legacy Seminar	11:30 am
Monday	Jan. 11, 2016	Vestry Meeting	6:00 pm
Saturday	Jan. 16, 2016	D.O.K.	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 17, 2016	Prayer Team Meeting	12:30 pm
Saturday	Jan. 23, 2016	<b>Big, Beautiful &amp; Broke Clothing Swap (1-5pm)</b>	1:00 pm
Sunday	Jan. 24, 2016	Outreach meeting	12:30 pm
Tuesday	Jan. 25, 2016	Epistle Deadline	12:00 pm
Sunday	Jan. 31, 2016	<b>Annual Meeting &amp; Combined Service</b>	10:00 am
Sunday	Jan. 31, 2016	<b>NO 5:00 p.m. service</b>	

### Recurring Events

#### Winter Worship Hours in effect - Worship times, 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.

EYC meets every Sunday @ **10:15** a.m. in the Youth Room.

#### **Rector's Sabbath is every Tuesday**

AA meets every Monday at 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the Choir Room

Choir Practice 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays or (Check with your Team Leader)

Praise Team 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays or (Check with your Team Leader)

AA (Women's group) meets Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Parish Hall

Alanon meets every Thursday at 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in Parish Hall

Lectio Divina – Bible Study meets Thursday mornings at 11:00 a.m.

Healing Service with Holy Eucharist Thursday Evening at 6:00 p.m.

Men's Bible Study Thursday evenings @ 7:00 p.m.

Food Pantry is open Wed. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. & Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

\*Fourth Wednesday of the month is the SNAP program & Food Bank Truck **ONLY**.

Gam-anon meets every Thursday 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Choir Room

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*St. Paul's  
Episcopal Church*



*Walking Together in Faith*

**January Worship Schedule**

**Jan 3rd** Only one service on this day

10:00 a.m. Epiphany Play

NO 5:00 p.m. service

**Jan 10<sup>th</sup>** One morning service on this day

10:00 a.m. Combined

5:00 p.m. Holy Communion

**Jan 17th** 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Jan 24th** 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Jan 31st** Only one service on this day

10:00 a.m. Annual Meeting and Worship

NO 5:00 p.m. service