

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **BE THE CHURCH**

We are collecting food for the Hope Center Food Pantry. You may bring food and leave it in the plastic bin at the back door. If you would like to send a monetary contribution to the Hope Center they would be most appreciative. Send to The Hope Center at 827 Commerce Street, Petersburg, VA 23803. You can also donate via their website at [dcuhopecenter.org](http://dcuhopecenter.org).

*Some Items needed are grape jelly, crackers, canned meat (tuna, chicken, spam, stew), along with canned fruits and vegetables.*

**PRAYER LIST:** We beg you to feed the hungry, protect the refugee, embrace the distressed, house the homeless, nurse the sick, and comfort the dying. Especially we pray for Tyrone Allen, Robyn Arrington, Brian Hettinger, Horace Higgins, Mark Jones, Josh Lumley, Mike McKibbin, Jason Pagano, Lilly Rudd, Mark Sheffield, Wendy Taft, Larry Tucker, and Paige Whitley.

### **Vacation**

Robin+ will be away the week of June 7-14. Worship on June 7 will be found as usual online. For worship on June 14, we will share some links to other online worship options. In case of pastoral emergency please contact Senior Warden Kemper Brinkley and he will connect you with the priest on call.

### **Congratulations Graduates!**

This Sunday we will recognize and congratulate our three Senior High graduates before they head toward college in the fall.

Ray Ellis, Prince George High School, attending Mary Washington  
Samuel Gates, Colonial Heights High School, attending Longwood  
Ashley Thacker, Prince George High School, attending Virginia Tech

### **Thank You!**

We have a freshly painted kitchen thanks to those who helped fund the project, emptied the kitchen, and then put everything back in place. Thanks to those of you who worked hard to make this blessing possible.

### **GENTLE REMINDER**

The church building is closed for our safety. We are not sanitizing the building at this time so every person who comes in is not only putting themselves at risk but also is exponentially increasing the risk of infection for others. If you need something from the building please email or call and arrange with us to pick up things on Wednesdays when we can bring it out to your car. We appreciate your understanding and care for one another.

## Pastoral Letter from Bishop Susan Haynes

***I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies... Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.*** (Amos 5:21-24)

We cannot continue to be silent. Too long we have refused to receive the breath of the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "There comes a time when silence is betrayal." In our silence we have dismissed the indiscriminate killing and violence levied on people of color, and especially African-Americans. Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd are just the latest of a long list of people of color, known and unknown who have died because of our silence.

In that great hymn of the church, "Breathe on me, Breath of God" we ask God to Fill us with life anew that we may love as God loves and do what God would do. And yet our Black brothers and sisters cannot breathe. The breath of life is being choked out of them. The knees which bear down on their necks are our knees of White privilege, institutional and systemic racism. "I can't breathe!" is something they have been trying to tell us for a long time. Our brothers and sisters can't breathe. But we CAN breathe! And because we can breathe, it is time for us to stand up, give voice to their lament and outrage and voice to our lament and outrage. They can't breathe, but we can; and we must breathe and speak so that our breath can send out the word that what we have seen and heard IS UNACCEPTABLE.

If we remain silent, we will have betrayed our community. This is not a call to polarization. This is not about pitting the police as villains and the people they are trying to arrest as the good guys. We are all beloved children of the God in whose image we all are created. But we are all pre-disposed toward actions of evil; and it is toward those actions that we can no longer be silent. The cry for justice must be sounded out by all to whom the breath of life has been given.

Many will say that words are not enough; and indeed they are not. They must be coupled with action that is constructive and supportive of all life. The words that go out on our breath must be matched with actions that support our Baptismal promises to persevere and resist evil, to repent of sin, to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ, to seek and serve all persons loving our neighbors as ourselves, and to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being. If we abandon these promises, we have walked away from God.

But what can we do? We can begin to look at ourselves and to root out every trace of our own racism. And it exists within all of us. This idea distresses us, because we want to be good people, and the idea of racism is abhorrent to us. But it exists. And the sooner we begin to shine the light on it, the sooner we will be freed from its oppression; and then, maybe then, our brothers and sisters of color will also be freed. The Episcopal Church, in its efforts towards "Becoming Beloved Community," has developed a curriculum called Sacred Ground. Many churches are beginning to offer opportunities to participate in this curriculum. If your church is one of them, please let the Diocesan office know. If you would like to find a group, please contact us, and we can help connect you. Our group on racial reconciliation, Repairers of the Breach, is working to update resources and action steps. Stay tuned through the Diocesan website, [diosova.org](http://diosova.org).

I invite you to recall the Parable of the Good Samaritan. That wounded person is currently on the side of the road. That person cannot breathe. Are we going to stop and take action, or are we going to keep walking? What will we do so that one day everyone will be able to breathe.

Yours faithfully in Christ,  
+Susan

## **Message from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry**

Presiding Bishop Curry's Word to the Church:  
When the Cameras are Gone, We Will Still Be Here  
*May 30, 2020*

A word to the Church from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry:  
"Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus. We will still be doing it when the news cameras are long gone."

In the midst of COVID-19 and the pressure cooker of a society in turmoil, a Minnesota man named George Floyd was brutally killed. His basic human dignity was stripped by someone charged to protect our common humanity.

Perhaps the deeper pain is the fact that this was not an isolated incident. It happened to Breonna Taylor on March 13 in Kentucky. It happened to Ahmaud Arbery on February 23 in Georgia. Racial terror in this form occurred when I was a teenager growing up black in Buffalo, New York. It extends back to the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 and well before that. It's not just our present or our history. It is part of the fabric of American life.

But we need not be paralyzed by our past or our present. We are not slaves to fate but people of faith. Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus. We will still be doing it when the news cameras are long gone.

That work of racial reconciliation and justice – what we know as Becoming Beloved Community – is happening across our Episcopal Church. It is happening in Minnesota and in the Dioceses of Kentucky, Georgia and Atlanta, across America and around the world. That mission matters now more than ever, and it is work that belongs to all of us.

It must go on when racist violence and police brutality are no longer front-page news. It must go on when the work is not fashionable, and the way seems hard, and we feel utterly alone. It is the difficult labor of picking up the cross of Jesus like Simon of Cyrene, and carrying it until no one – no matter their color, no matter their class, no matter their caste – until no child of God is degraded and disrespected by anybody. That is God's dream, this is our work, and we shall not cease until God's dream is realized.

Is this hopelessly naïve? No, the vision of God's dream is no idealistic utopia. It is our only real hope. And, St. Paul says, "hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). Real love is the dogged commitment to live my life in the most unselfish, even sacrificial ways; to love God, love my neighbor, love the earth and truly love myself. Perhaps most difficult in times like this, it is even love for my enemy. That is why we cannot condone violence. Violence against any person – conducted by some police officers or by some protesters – is violence against a child of God created in God's image. No, as followers of Christ, we do not condone violence.

Neither do we condone our nation's collective, complicit silence in the face of injustice and violent death. The anger of so many on our streets is born out of the accumulated frustration that so few seem to care when another black, brown or native life is snuffed out.

But there is another way. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a broken man lay on the side of the road. The religious leaders who passed were largely indifferent. Only the Samaritan saw the wounded stranger and acted. He provided medical care and housing. He made provision for this stranger's well-being. He helped and healed a fellow child of God.

Love, as Jesus teaches, is action like this as well as attitude. It seeks the good, the well-being, and the welfare of others as well as one's self. That way of real love is the only way there is. Accompanying this statement is a card describing ways to practice the [Way of Love in the midst of pandemic, uncertainty and loss](#). In addition, you will find online a set of resources to help Episcopalians to LEARN, PRAY & ACT in response to racist violence and police brutality. That resource set includes faithful tools for listening to and learning from communities too often ignored or suppressed, for incorporating God's vision of justice into your personal and community prayer life, and for positively and constructively engaging in advocacy and public witness.

Opening and changing hearts does not happen overnight. The Christian race is not a sprint; it is a marathon. Our prayers and our work for justice, healing and truth-telling must be unceasing. Let us recommit ourselves to following in the footsteps of Jesus, the way that leads to healing, justice and love.

### **Message from Robin+**

*Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18*

Friends,

I've spent the last five days reading volumes of articles describing the protesting that is occurring across our nation. Protesting not only the murder of George Floyd but also the injustices done to people of color since our country was founded. So many words, varying opinions, peaceful and violent reactions, and always the shadow of politics over it all. So many words expressing the pain, oppression, anger, suffering, grief, and just about any other emotion we could name.

I have had a difficult time coming up with more words. I have felt guilt about my inability to find words. So many, especially Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Bishop Susan Haynes have powerfully spoken to what is happening and how the Church must respond as Jesus would.

Still searching for words, I took a long walk in my neighborhood. I am a white woman living in a predominantly white suburb, with the privilege of being able to take a break from working at home to take a walk. As I walked through the beauty of green lawns, planted spring flowers, and the sound of birdsong, I saw a group of precious children, playing on their driveway, delighting in filling a wading pool and buckets with cool water on this warm day. There was an

endless supply of water bubbling from the garden hose and rolling down the driveway like an everflowing stream. I imagine they were also joyfully celebrating the end of their school year that was completed online. They are much more aware than we think they are about what is going on in the world around us, and yet they are still young, still innocent of the sin of racism. Having been in elementary school in Richmond during the integration of schools, I know that racism is taught. So, I wondered as I walked on, what our children are learning from us as they watch us in these times?

I lamented that some children can access online learning when many cannot; that they can splash in water in the driveway on a warm summer day, when there are children in our country who do not have safe water to drink. Neither do they have a safe, bullet-free driveway in which to play, still, in the year 2020 in America. And while everything going on in our world right now is enough to overwhelm even the strongest of us, my heart aches for those who are weak, for those who are oppressed, for those without access to fair wages or healthcare. But most of all my heart aches for our children and grandchildren and the inheritance we are leaving for them.

When I finished my walk, the words began to flow – for as Augustine said, "Solvitur ambulando" which is Latin for, "It is solved by walking" and I often find this to be true. And what came to me in prayer is that perhaps I have no eloquent words because it is no longer time for eloquent words, as inspiring as they might be. For me, at least, it is time for justice; it is time for action. It is time to be the Church, to be about the work of dismantling the institution of racism.

We might want to turn on the garden hose and soak in the water of action right away, so that we can feel like we are doing something productive, so that we can feel joyous about our efforts, but that cannot be our first action. We need to learn about garden hoses, and where water comes from, and what contaminates it, and where it goes when it leaves the hose. We first need to educate ourselves by reading about antiracism, we need to listen to the experiences of people who have lived their lives under the oppression of racism, and after we listen, we must not assume we know what is needed, but ask what is needed by those we hope to support. I know that I have much to learn and that contemplation and action are two sides of the coin of justice.

I am going to keep walking and praying and listening and I invite you to join me. If you would like to be part of this work in our parish I hope you will let me know. There are books, programs from the Episcopal Church, and numerous resources to help us with this work. It's long past time for us to become part of the dismantling of the sin of racism. Robin+

*But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Amos 5:24*

## Sermon for Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020

The great theologian, Augustine of Hippo, was walking along the beach one day, taking a break from writing one of his many books on the Trinity. The great scholar just couldn't get his mind around this great mystery. The story goes that he saw a little boy digging a hole in the sand, and then running to the ocean, filling up his bucket with the seawater, running back to the hole, and emptying the water into the hole. Augustine watched as the child went back and forth several times. Finally he asked the boy, "What are you doing?" The boy said, "Trying to fill that hole with the ocean." And Augustine said, "You'll never drain the sea into the sand." And the boy said, "Neither will you be able to fit the Trinity into your mind."

Christians have been wrestling with the nature of the Trinity since the beginning of the Church. According to the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "three persons of one substance." I have to keep rereading my favorite explanations of the Trinity, I have to keep pondering how I see and experience the Trinity in my life. So perhaps the Church does not assign this doctrine to us each year to define or explain the Trinity, but to remind us to notice where we see the Trinity in the world around us, in our community here at Christ and Grace, and in our personal lives.

We use the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit so easily and freely in our prayers and worship. At the very core of theological explanations of the Trinity is the idea that Father, Son, and Spirit are in essence a community. Moving as one, always connected, always complementing each other, always giving and receiving love.

And why does the doctrine of the Trinity even matter? How many of us are thinking about church doctrine in the middle of a pandemic or with all the unrest that is happening in our nation right now? Probably not many of us! But maybe the nature of God does matter to us in times of dissension, crisis, fear, and loss. Because when chaotic events happen they often pull back a veil that reveals selfishness and individualism; that reveals that our community is not as strong, good, healthy, and whole as we might prefer to think. This pandemic, and then the final straw of yet another injustice, as the very breath of life was pressed out of George Floyd, uncover our sins known and unknown, things done and left undone.

Today's reading from the last chapter of Matthew is often referred to as the Great Commission. "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." Interesting that even as they were worshipping Jesus, who was right there in front of them, some of them doubted. But Jesus does not appear to judge them for their doubt or think that in their doubt they are any less equipped to work in the kingdom. Rather than focusing on their doubt Jesus simply says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

If you have the least doubt in your heart right now, about your relationship with Jesus, or about all that is happening around us, I want you to hear that Jesus honors that doubt. I pray we will take time to be still with that doubt and invite the Spirit of truth to convict us and empower us to begin the work of becoming a beloved community of God, loving one another. Our relationships, our interconnectedness, to God and to one another matter.

God is a community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are one community, one God – what we call the Trinity. And so when we come together as a community of love, we gain more and

more the potential to reflect the image of God in which we are created. The image of God that is love and forgiveness, equality and justice.

Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry has reminded us this week that we are all children of God, no matter the color of our skin, no matter whether we are protestors or police. We are brothers and sisters, related to one another in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live together in peace as we ensure justice and the welfare of all.

So how do we model the image of God in which we have been created? How do we live together? We make a daily decision to live the way of love. Bishop Curry reminds us that the opposite of love is not hate, it's selfishness. Jesus lived and taught this way of love, an unselfish life seeking the good, not of ourselves alone, but of all humanity. And it starts as a decision. Bishop Curry suggests that one symbol for love is a face mask. I wear one to protect you, and you wear one to protect me, and when we do that we all win!

Perhaps defining the Trinity is less important than experiencing the Trinity. We live and breathe because of the relationship we have with God and with one another, created in the very image of the Trinity, created to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and striving for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

There will always be doubts, whether we are contemplating the Trinity or finding ways to dismantle the sin of racism and end injustice. There will be days that seem as futile as trying to drain the sea into the sand. May we take our doubts to God in prayer, and then strive to live our lives reflecting the image of our Creator; for in the striving we will experience the power of the Spirit helping us to proclaim the love of God as we walk in the way of love with Jesus. Amen.

### **A Prayer for Social Justice**

Almighty God, who created us in your image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*The Book of Common Prayer, page 260*