"With the Spirit and Fire," Jan Richardson

“There is one coming who will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”, says John the Baptizer. According to the Prophet Malachi, the Holy Spirit comes as a “refiner’s fire.” It is said the refiner heats the silver until it reflects his face. Through the Spirit’s refining fire we hope to reflect the face of Good living in us. Yet fire is a fearful thing. “It is true, fire will bring pain. Fire brings blessing of warmth. Fire keeps the beasts at bay. Fire heals and shows the way. Fire inspires and transforms.

“Clarissa Pinkola Estes in “Dangerous Old Women

A Beginning Prayer

O Refiner,
Sifter, Separator, Smelter:
Come burn the dross in us
And mark us with love. Amen.

(Where do you see God’s “mark of love” in your own life today?)
In Need of Prayer or Home Communion?
St. Luke’s Prayer Ministers are available during the 10:30 AM service to pray with you. If you would like a name added to our Prayer Chain or someone who needs Home Communion, contact Beckie in the Church Office.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY:
Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael, our Presiding Bishop, and Scott, our Diocesan Bishop and for ALL the people and parishes in our diocese. Pray especially for St. James’ Church in Midvale. And for all people within the world-wide Anglican Communion; pray for the people & leaders of The Church of Korea.

OUR NATION & ITS LEADERS:
Our government leaders that they may live & work in a spirit of calm reason & cooperation on behalf of the common good.

THOSE WHO ARE FACING SUFFERING & HARDSHIP:
Robert++++ (husband of Iris Thompson), Rita++++ (Baden), Emmy++++ (granddaughter of Deedee Sihvonen), Jennifer++++ (Strachan) Tom++++ (brother of Joe Cordery) Kaylee++++ (friend of Beckie Raemer) Peter++ ++ (VanHook) Rick ++++ (Giacoma) Randy+++++ (brother of Beckie Raemer) Pam+++++ (Bro), Sean & Jordan R. ++ ++ (family of Charles & Bonnie) Frannie++ (friend of Teresa McMillan) Laurie+++++ (friend of Barbara Wine) Jane++ (friend of Leslie Wood) Mary+ (wife of Ray Freer) Steve++ (husband of Beckie Raemer) Dick & Martha+ + (friends of the Jennings) Jim & Jean+ (friends of Ed Fiscus)

THE HUMAN COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORLD:
† For the victims and their families and all those affected by the shooting at the Christmas Market in France.
† Pray for the speedy release of the thousands of immigrant children who remain in federal custody.
† Pray for our nation and the whole human community that we may find the wisdom to live in greater respect and harmony with each other and our planet home.
† For safety and recovery for all people effected by natural disasters throughout the world.
† For healing for every soul captured by fear, bigotry and resentment. May we all develop the ability to see the Sacred in those most different from ourselves.

THOSE WHO HAVE DIED……

PLEASE GIVE THANKS FOR…..
Our Vestry Members; Bob Casey, Ted Clayton, Linda Dugins, Mike Fiery, Julie Fiscus, Rusty Martz, Chris Munro, Deb Walter and Leslie Wood and their families.

For those having Birthdays this week: Mary Freer on Tuesday and Katherine Martz on Wednesday.

Our Parish Community Prayer list: ++ Please note that we will place a + after each name for each week the name is on our prayer list. After four weeks (++++) the name will be removed unless otherwise requested.

If you need pastoral support or know someone that does, please call Fr. Charles+, at 435-901-2131. Remember, Charles+ still can’t read minds so he will not know unless you tell him. Calls will be kept confidential.
The Scriptures
Advent 3c - Dec. 16, 2018

The Collect of the Day: Examining human history over the past 2000 years, it is not clear if theology has been mostly a force for good or a tool for evil. Too often, we have allowed ourselves to rigidly identify with a particular theology thereby setting ourselves against our neighbor. We pray for the wisdom to cling, not to particular theological theories, but to the practices of love, compassion and mercy; with Jesus our Brother, Teacher and Lord. Amen

From the Hebrew Scriptures:
Our first lesson comes from the 12th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "I will trust, and will not be afraid." These words were spoken by the prophet Isaiah to the people of Judah and Jerusalem more than twenty seven hundred years ago, when the Assyrian Empire was the dominant power, and Judah lived in the shadow of its might. Foreign invaders, political instability, and crises of one kind or another formed the context of Isaiah's proclamation. The people to whom he was sent and those for whom this book was originally composed lived in a world that was unpredictable and out of their control. Please read with me from the Hebrew tradition by reading the parts in bold print....Surely, it is God who saves me; * I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense; * and he will be my Savior. Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing * from the springs of salvation. And on that day you shall say, * Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name; Make his deeds known among the peoples; * see that they remember that his Name is exalted. Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, * and this is known in all the world. Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy. * for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Here ends the reading.

From the Muslim Tradition:
Unlike the laws described by modern science, the wisdom taught by the great religious traditions is inherently moral, and is the basis for human ethics. The Hindu concept of Dharma, for example, embraces at once the cosmological, ethical, social, and legal principles that provide the basis for belief in an ordered universe and an ordered, prosperous society. Religion, therefore, cannot easily accept the modern belief in an ordered universe and an ordered, prosperous society. Religion, therefore, cannot easily accept the modern principle that every bit as absolute as the fact that the earth revolves about the sun. The way to health and wholeness lies in following the divine laws and revealed teachings--e.g., the Tao (in Taoism), the Torah (in Judaism), the Reading (in Islam), the eternal Dharma (in Hinduism and Sikhism), the Dhamma revealed by the Buddha, or the Word revealed in the Gospel (in Christianity). Please read with me from the Holy Qur’an by reading the parts in bold print....Have you not seen how God has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree-- its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven; it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. So God strikes similitudes for men; haply they will remember. And the likeness of a corrupt word is as a corrupt tree-- uprooted form the earth, having no establishment. God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come; and God leads astray the evildoers; and God does what He will. Here ends the reading.

Form the Christian Gospels: Luke 3:7-18
Priest: The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.
John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Priest: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

The Offertory Sentence:
Priest: My brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, when you come to the Table of the Lord, come not only to receive the presence of the Lord, but also to give your life completely to Him. As Jesus said, the Greatest Commandments are these: People: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[Hebrew & Christian scripture passages are reprinted with permission from the World Council of Churches. Passages from extra-biblical sources are reprinted with permission from World Scriptures.]
Ethics or Theology: Which was Primary in the Ministries of John and Jesus?

Advent 3c - Dec. 16, 2018

The Dean of Harvard Divinity School was once asked to define the word “religion.” He replied that he could not because the term is used so differently by so many people in differing cultures around the world. Webster’s Dictionary, nevertheless, bravely takes a stab at it. It defines religion as “the service and worship of God or the supernatural: commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance.” And what about “theology”? Is there any consensus about its meaning? Webster defines the task of theology as “the study of religious faith, practice, and experience; especially the study of God and of God's relation to the world.” St. Anselm writing in the 11th century defined theology as “faith seeking understanding.” Now, we could easily spend all day doing our best to define each of the key terms mentioned here, but the one I want to turn our attention toward is the word “God.” Theology is the study of human faith, practice and experience as they relate to God and it is also thought of as the study of God or the concept of God. And religion, that is, religious practice seems to want to explain how we are supposed to relate to God.

In both religion and theology, “God” seems to have the key role. Now, if I called on you and asked you to tell me who or what God is, what would you say to me? And if I asked you to explain how you know that God is that which you suggest, what would you tell me? These questions are interesting enough in themselves, but even more interesting is the insistence that people of various cultures and in various times and places have had during the past 3000 years that they know who or what God is. In other words, even though the word “God” is abstract and even though God, if God is some kind of object or being, cannot be detected with any of our physical senses, people have argued, debated, fought and sometimes killed one another as a result of differing ideas and definitions of “God.”

Here are two examples, one from world history and the second from personal experience. Between 1100 and 1300 C.E. as crusaders were traveling to the Holy Land, they were told that to kill a Muslim is a morally righteous thing because Muslims have a different name for God, hold different ideas about Jesus and occupy lands Christians assumed they should possess. During those wars somewhere between one and three million were killed because of theological differences. On another occasion, much less bloody and far more recent, I was visiting my family’s 4000 member Baptist Church in North Carolina. Sitting in a crowd of over 1000, I had the great joy and privilege of hearing the pastor declare that the Episcopal Church had lost its way; we are living outside of God’s will. Why? Because we do not hold to his understanding of the Bible, the nature of God, nor his interpretation of what it means to follow Jesus. Our only hope is to have the same theology, to think the same way as that Baptist pastor. Consistently within Christian history over the past 2000 years, the compulsion to think that it all hangs on having the correct theology, the correct set of beliefs and the correct understanding of God has ruled the roost. The fruit of such thinking has consistently been painful and tragic.

So imagine my surprise when I read today’s Gospel story. John the Baptist is preaching repentance, inviting people to change direction in their lives. He referred to the coming Day of the Lord; the coming judgment of God. 1st - The crowds asked him what they needed to do to avoid the wrath of God. His reply: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none and whoever has food must do likewise.” John declares that what matters most is how we treat our neighbor, especially how we treat the poor and the hungry. But wait a minute! Something’s wrong. Shouldn’t John have declared that to avoid the wrath of God to come one must believe only in Yahweh, the God of Israel? 2nd - Tax collectors (those who practiced professional extortion) asked what they needed to do to find favor in God’s eyes. John answered, “You must commit your mind and heart to the idea that a messiah will soon be born and that this messiah will actually be God in human form to be delivered.” No! John responded, not with a theological statement, but with an ethical imperative; “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” In other words, stop extorting people and robbing them under the cover of the Empire. 3rd - The soldiers asked John, “What should we do to avoid being condemned?” John replied, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusations and be satisfied with your wages.” Notice, there is no mention of a correct or mandated theology. There is no mention of an absolute necessity to belong to one religious group or another. Each and every time, John responds with the call to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

It seems that John is teaching that to love God one must love and have compassion for one’s neighbor. You cannot have correct beliefs and meaningful doctrines about God if you do not understand and incorporate the call to love, compassion
and mercy into your daily thinking, believing and acting. Acting with care and compassion toward others, with or without religion’s imprimatur, is how we love God. Jesus seems to share the same understanding of spirituality and the meaning of God (which makes sense because Jesus was very likely a disciple of John).

Allow me to share a handful of examples by a brief examination of the first/earliest Gospel, the Gospel of Mark. In Mark 1, Jesus delivers a man possessed of demons and he does so without making any demands of the one delivered. Also in Mark 1, Jesus heals a woman without ever mentioning religious beliefs. At the end of Mark 1, Jesus heals a leper without ever discussing the leper’s beliefs or religious ideas. And I could go on and on. We can easily miss this emphasis on compassionate action and attitude because all of the stories of Jesus are framed by each of the Gospel writers’ theological agendas. They want us to believe certain ideas about Jesus which were of theological concern to those within their communities.

The point I want to make this morning is this: in our tradition and probably in most of the world’s great religious traditions, the beliefs-theology one holds about various religious topics are a distant second in importance to how we live in relationship with our fellow human beings and especially how we relate to the poor, the sick and the powerless. Again and again, directly and indirectly, our scriptures point to the idea that having THE correct definition of God has little or no meaning if we fail to relate to the different, the poor, the foreigner, the social outcast and the politically powerless with love, compassion and mercy. Love of the other is love of God. Love of God is love of our neighbors. The Dalai Lama puts it this way, “The essence of compassion is a desire to alleviate the suffering of others and to promote their well-being. This is the spiritual principle from which all other positive inner values emerge.” Amen.

Blessings, Fr. Charles+

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**A Special Note of Thanks to…..**

Mike Fiery, Lee Osborne and Rusty Martz for working hard to paint the Education Wing of our church building. It looks great, guys…..THANK YOU!!!!

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**Annual St. Luke’s Parish Evaluation 2018**

It’s that time of year. We will collect your thoughts, feedback and good ideas from now until January 1st. The survey has these 7 questions and the link to it can be found on the homepage of our parish website: www.stlukesparkcity.org

1. What is the Rector doing now that you would like him to continue to do or do more of?
2. What is the Rector not doing that you would like him to begin doing?
3. What is the Rector doing that you wish he would stop doing?
4. What is the Vestry and/or Parish Staff doing that you would like them to continue doing or do more of?
5. What is the Vestry and/or Parish Staff not doing that you wish they would begin doing?
6. What is the Vestry and/or Parish Staff doing that you wish they would stop doing?
7. Our St. Luke’s Principles of Community urge is to deal with hurt and conflict in healthy ways by talking directly to rather than about those with whom there is a significant injury, resentment or disruption to others. Based upon your experiences at St. Luke’s, how are we doing as a parish community in living and practicing this principle?

And at the very end, before you click on “Done,” you will be asked for your name and email address: “Please enter your name and email address in the box below. Thank you!! (P.S. If you are unwilling to give us your name, that probably means you are ashamed of something you have written. Would you like to go back and say it a different way? You can you know. Only surveys with the respondent's name and contact info will be read and included in the final report.)

To fill it out, put this web address in your browser: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XT7YFPB](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XT7YFPB)

THANK YOU!!!
The Holiday Broadcast is truly a magical time at The Road Home and we would love your help!

The Road Home's 2018 Holiday Mediathon will be December 20th - 21st, 2018. Local media stations broadcast live from our Salt Lake Community Shelter and will encourage listeners to donate in-kind items or make a financial contribution. Sponsors will be matching the financial contributions so listener's $1 turns into $2!

The Road Home is in need of volunteers December 20th and 21st, at the Salt Lake Community Shelter and the Midvale Family Center, both on the street collecting donations and in the warehouse sorting and organizing the donations. Radio stations will be broadcasting live. The Road Home will continue to operate without the radio stations on the 22nd and 23rd, and are in need of volunteers for those dates as well.

To volunteer during our Holiday Mediathon, please go to www.theroadhome.org, then select volunteers and Holidays and click on one of the links below:

Salt Lake Community Shelter (210 South Rio Grande Street, Salt Lake City)
Midvale Family Center (529 West 7300 South, Midvale)

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**The Candy Cane Corner**

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**Winter Supplies of All Kinds Needed for the Homeless to Survive This Winter in SLC**

It’s not just coats and warm socks….please donate things to help **men, women and children** survive on the streets of SLC during the winter months. We will collect items everyday between now and New Years. Please help us spread the word and please give generously. Someone’s health or life may depend on it this winter. Thank you!!!

The Road Home shelters are always in need of the following items:
- shaving razors, shampoo, soaps, deodorants, socks, chapsticks and sunscreen. **There will be a container in the entry hall labeled ROAD HOME for all donations.**
- I also encourage everyone to download the “RunCoin” application and log in Charity Miles for Road Home; select Road Home once downloaded.
- For more information, google Charity Miles to find out how the app works. Please get in touch with Teresa McMillan, teresa.b.mcmillan@gmail.com, 678-575-3781, if you have any questions or suggestions.

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**Congratulations, St. Luke’s Parish Community!**

We now have 3 nominations for election for the 2019 Vestry: **Jim Bolton, Maribel Cedillo** and **Steve Baker**. If you get a chance, please express your gratitude to each of these for their willingness to serve. Additional nominations are welcome. If no other nominations are made, **Jim, Maribel** and **Steve** will be elected by acclamation on Feb. 3rd at our Annual Celebration.
WINDRIDER FORUM HOST HOMES

We would not be able to offer such a unique opportunity to professors and students without the generosity of Park City’s local churches and partners.

Overview of the Windrider Forum and host family program

The Windrider Forum (www.windriderforum.org) is a unique cultural immersion experience at the Sundance Film Festival that brings undergraduate and graduate students, professors, filmmakers, pastors, youth workers, and community leaders together to engage in a dialogue about some of the most challenging issues facing our culture today as portrayed by the cinematic arts. We identify ways to bridge the divisiveness that often exists when these conversations take place. We equip and encourage participants to find meaningful ways to tell stories of hope, reconciliation, and redemption. From our modest beginnings in 2005, we have grown to become the largest student group, more than 250 students from over 15 different colleges and universities throughout the country. This year The Sundance Institute has asked to partner with Windrider Forum.

We would not be able to offer such a noteworthy opportunity without the generosity of our local partners. One valuable way that you can help is to offer to host a student or two in your home for the week long session.

All of our guests are adults, ranging in age from early 20’s and older. They are encouraged to arrive on Sunday, January 27th and stay until Saturday, February 2 or Sunday, February 3rd. They follow a very tight schedule with class in the mornings, starting at 8:30 am and then out to view films, sometimes until later at night. They are asked to organize their own transportation (if the host home is close to the bus line public transport will be used, if not, a rental car.) The host family is not expected to serve a meal but it would be nice, if possible, to have some snacks available for them for a light breakfast.

Although you will not see much of your guests during the week we are confident you will enjoy meeting them, hearing about their backgrounds, and their experience at Windrider Forum at Sundance. And they will certainly enjoy meeting you!

We are extending a personal invitation to all of our host families to be our guests at Opening Night on January 28th for Windrider Short Film Showcase and dinner. It will take place at the LDS State Center, 2300 Monitor Drive, from 5pm to 9pm. There will be a Q and A to follow with the filmmakers of the award winning shorts.

For more information on becoming a host family for Windrider at Sundance 2019, please call or write: Jill Sobol at 217 620 -7108 or write jesobol@gmail.com or Mary V. Cass 303 359-6017 or write mvcass2013@gmail.com
CONSIDERING JOINING THE ST. LUKE'S COMMUNITY? JUST WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH? Our rector would be delighted to make an appointment to meet with you. He will do his best to answer your questions and to help you to feel welcomed and included at St. Luke's. When you are ready to have a conversation, just let him know at either: pastor@stlukespc.org or 435-901-2131.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: You will find info about our church and what to expect when you visit. www.stlukesparkcity.org. There is information about our missions, finances and programs. You can view previous sermons through a link to You Tube on your phone or home computer. Go to You Tube, St Luke’s Episcopal Church Park City, UT.

CENTERING PRAYER: Meets Friday mornings at 10:00 AM in the Library. Please join us in this contemplative practice of Holy Silence.

WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY: Our study is "The Way of Prayer" in the companions in Christ series. We meet Wednesdays in the library at 6:30 pm. If you would like to join the group please talk to Mary Parsons.

WOMEN’S GATHERING: We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM. Please being a drink or a dish to share.

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Is It Time For You To Revisit Your Charitable Giving Strategy?

Due to changes in the tax laws that went into effect starting in 2018, fewer taxpayers are likely to benefit from itemized deductions than in the past. State and local tax deductions (income and property taxes) in 2018 are limited to $10,000. Standard deductions are increased to $12,000 for individuals and $24,000 for joint returns, therefore more people will be using the standard deduction and not getting a tax benefit from charitable giving.

That calls for rethinking your charitable giving strategy. If you're older than age 70 1/2 and taking required minimum distributions from IRA, you can employ what's called a qualified charitable distribution. With the QCD, you steer all or a portion of your RMD, up to $100,000, to the charities of your choice; the amount of your contribution reduces your adjusted gross income. Such donations can count toward the owner’s required minimum withdrawal. For the charitably minded, this move is often highly tax efficient.

One way around the new higher hurdles for deducting donations is to bunch them, combining several years’ gifts into one larger amount every few years. That amount, together with other Schedule A write-offs, could be greater than the standard deduction. A donor-advised fund enables you to make a large charitable contribution in a given year (and potentially take a deduction on it) but take your time in getting the money deployed to charities.