St. Luke's Episcopal Church is a Christian community composed of free thinkers who include conservatives, moderates, liberals, skeptics, believers & atheists. All are welcome!

St. Luke's Weekly Magazine
March 3, 2019

Please take this home with you today.

Love God….Think for Yourself!

TO OUR GUESTS - WELCOME - THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE TODAY!
All spiritual seekers who are searching for an approach to faith that makes the most sense to them personally are welcome here! PLEASE NOTE: During the 10:30 worship service, we normally video-record the sermon for posting on You-Tube. Your image may be captured during recording.
To view sermons, go to You-Tube and then search for “St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Park City.”

Image: Stairway at the Cloisters by Rick Morley
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 the Christian Center. And for all people within the world-wide Anglican Communion; pray for the people & leaders of The Church of Chile.

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) Randy and Kaylee (brother and friend of Beckie Raemer) Pam (parents of Cathy Callow-Heuser), Claudia (wife of Lou Giacoma) Anne (mother of Jane Hamilton) Linda (Sears) Sharon+ (Christiansen)

THE HUMAN COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORLD:
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......
Pray for the Repose of the Soul of Drew Bell’s Mother

PLEASE GIVE THANKS FOR.....
Our Ushers and Greeters and their families.

For those having Birthdays this week:
Derrell Reeves today; Peggy Bergmann on Thursday and Deb Walter on Saturday.
The Collect of the Day: As finite human beings, our vision is naturally limited to the physical things of our material universe. We pray, therefore, for the wisdom and spiritual insight that will allow us to see and rightly discern such principles as love, compassion, justice, mercy, unity and loving-kindness in and through and all around us; with Jesus our Brother, Teacher and Lord. Amen.

From the Hebrew Scriptures:
Our first lesson comes from the 34th chapter of the Book of the Exodus. Professor Esther Menn notes that within the larger narrative context, Moses’ radiant visage affirms his authority as God’s representative. Transformed unconsciously through his mountaintop encounter with God for forty days and nights, Moses brings and even embodies divine revelation concerning the way of life within a covenant relationship with God. The curious verb “shone” describing Moses’ skin is not found elsewhere in the Bible. Since it resembles the Hebrew word for an animal’s “horn,” Jerome in the Vulgate posits that Moses sprouted horns, an interpretive tradition followed by artists such as Michelangelo and Chagall. This image creates an uneasy parallel with the calf fashioned by Aaron in his brother’s absence. Please read with me from the Hebrew tradition by reading the parts in bold print. …Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him. Here ends the reading.

From the Hindu Tradition:
Kashmir Shaivism is a group of nondualist Tantric Shaiva exegetical traditions from Kashmir that originated after 850 CE. Kashmir Shaivism claimed to supersede Shaiva Siddhanta, a dualistic tradition which scholars consider normative tantric Shaivism. The Shaiva Siddhanta goal of becoming an ontologically distinct Shiva (through Shiva’s grace) was replaced by recognizing oneself as Shiva who, in Kashmir Shaivism’s monism, is the entirety of the universe. It is a non-dualistic metaphysics and gnostic approach to wholeness in opposition to the dualistic exegesis of the Shaiva Siddhanta. Please read with me from the Hindu tradition by reading the parts in bold print. …All that exists, throughout all time and beyond, is one infinite divine Consciousness, free and blissful, which projects within the field of its awareness a vast multiplicity of apparently differentiated subjects and objects: each object an actualization of a timeless potentiality inherent in the Light of Consciousness, and each subject the same plus a contracted locus of self-awareness. This creation, a divine play, is the result of the natural impulse within Consciousness to express the totality of its self-knowledge in action, an impulse arising from love.

The unbounded Light of Consciousness contracts into finite embodied loci of awareness out of its own free will. When those finite subjects then identify with the limited and circumscribed cognitions and circumstances that make up this phase of their existence, instead of identifying with the transindividual overarching pulsation of pure Awareness that is their true nature, they experience what they call “suffering.” To rectify this, some feel an inner urge to take up the path of spiritual gnosis and yogic practice, the purpose of which is to undermine their misidentification and directly reveal within the immediacy of awareness the fact that the divine powers of Consciousness, Bliss, Willing, Knowing, and Acting comprise the totality of individual experience as well—thereby triggering a recognition that one’s real identity is that of the highest Divinity, the Whole in every part.

Here ends the reading.

Priest: The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.
About eight days after Peter had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God, Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

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.]
Is Religious Language the Language of Art?
The Last Sunday of Epiphany C - March 3, 2019

A few weeks ago we introduced the idea that religious language, i.e., language about God and related topics, the language we use in all of our liturgies seems to be a unique form of language. The goal of this inquiry is to uncover an alternative understanding of religion and religious language on behalf of all those for whom religious, creedal and biblical literalism no longer make sense. If biblical literalism and the traditional interpretation of the Christian narrative do make sense to you and you are comfortable with them, God bless you. Here at St. Luke’s everyone is urged to think for him/herself.

Clearly religious language is not scientific language because it deals with topics that are understood to transcend the natural universe. Religious language is filled with statements and knowledge-claims that can be neither verified nor falsified scientifically. For example, there is no known way of gathering verifiable evidence in support of the assertion that angels and demons exist and that they influence what happens in our lives. The Church throughout Christian history right on up to today has tried to push back against this criticism by insisting that it knows the things it claims to know through divine revelation, i.e., “we know these things because God told us these things are true and God would never lie to us and God is incapable of making a mistake.” The problem with these assertions, of course, is that they too are neither verifiable nor falsifiable using any known scientific method. These are claims that lots and lots of people accept as true, but there is no way to confirm their accuracy and passionately believing something is true doesn’t make it actually true. And to make matters worse, the clergy have agreed to avoid mentioning this. When we get into the pulpit, we talk about God and the stories in the Bible as if they are factual and should be righteously interpreted literally. But in spite of this, religious language should never be read as scientific language because religion doesn’t play by the same rules as science.

An alternative is to explore the possibility that religious language is best interpreted as a category within aesthetics. If religion speaks a language that is not true in a scientific sense, perhaps it speaks a language similar to the language of art. Perhaps, when we are reading a Bible story about a prophet with a shining face, or God dictating moral laws up on a mountain top, or religious figures of centuries past reappearing in the present, we should think about art; we should hear these stories as word-paintings that are intended to evoke some response in us. Let’s look at how we define, think and talk about art to see if there are similarities with religious concepts and language. The study of art and how it works is known as “aesthetics.” According to Webster, the term “aesthetic” is has roots in the German ästhetisch "pertaining to taste or discernment," the New Latin aestheticus, and the Greek ἀεstatsikós "of sense perception, sensitive, perceptive - to perceive, take notice of, understand.” So aesthetics is concerned with how our minds interface with our perceptions of the world and with questions of taste, beauty and imagination.

At a museum in Denmark in 2000, the artist Marco Evaristi set up a work of art entitled "Helena" that involved live goldfish swimming around in vessels full of water. The vessels were electric blenders. Evaristi invited museum patrons to turn on the blenders if they so desired. Eventually, one person so desired and the fish was pulverized. Before long police arrived ordering that the blenders be unplugged. The museum was charged with animal cruelty although the charges were later dropped. Evaristi said that his work was designed to sort people into three categories: (1) if you want to push the button he said you're a sadist; (2) if the exhibit makes you feel upset, you're a moralist; and (3) if you enjoy watching the reactions of others, you're a voyeur. Now, while Evaristi’s method was repulsive, his goal was a religious one - or one could compare it to one aspect of the work of religion. His goal was to provoke people to think about there own values and ethics. Am I a sadist? If I am honest with myself, do I enjoy voyeurism? Just as religious storytelling and teaching urge us toward moral reflection and awareness, so does art….at least some of the time.

Many people argued that goldfish in blenders weren’t art at all. You probably have your own opinions about that, but no matter what you think of goldfish in blenders we have to admit that works like Evaristi’s raise a lot of questions about art and morality including: (1) what standards we should use to evaluate art; (2) what does art tell us about ourselves; (3) what does it do to us; and (4) what purpose does art serve in our lives? And notice, we could easily replace the word “art” with “religion” in each of these areas.

Both art and religion seem to connect deeply with and profoundly affect our emotional life. Plato passionately distrusted art because he believed that art plays to our emotions rather than to our reason. Recall that Plato's idea of the human soul was that it had three aspects: the rational, the appetitive and the spirit. He thought the rational part of the soul should always be in charge. Art, therefore, was problematic for him because it encourages us to think with the spirited or emotional part of our souls. He also had a beef with art because he said it depicts the imaginary as if it were real. Plato was very focused upon coming to know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth devoid of deception and misperception. He worried, therefore, about art because art is concerned with creating mere images and representations of real things; not the real things themselves. And Plato is not alone.

Let's fast forward about 2,400 years and notice the British philosopher R.G. Collingwood who, like Plato, acknowledged that art is frequently used as an escape from life, a simple amusement, a distraction from aspects of life we do not want to face. Many have accused religion of serving the exact same function; of being an emotional crutch or psychological form of denial and escape; a flight into magical thinking for comfort’s sake. But Collingwood also said that the best art, the art that really matters is the stuff that changes the way we interact with the world. So Collingwood drew a distinction between what he called “amusement art” and “magic art.” Amusement art helps the audience escape from reality. Magic art helps the audience learn how better to interact with this world's reality. A great example of this is Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin. Stowe's story helped to change our national reality. A great example of this is Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin. Stowe's story helped to change our national mindset about slavery by making white readers see African Americans as human beings with whom they had a lot in common rather than as a nameless others who should be thought of as property. Collingwood felt we should spend our time on magic art that holds the potential to help us live better rather than simply running away from the world. I suspect this same dualism is descriptive of religious faith. Some forms of religious faith seem to emphasize a flight into the loving and reassuring arms of a divine parent while other forms emphasize our call to run toward the world and all of its conflicts and suffering in order to be conduits of love, justice and mercy.

So, that’s probably enough for today. We have talked about the following similarities between art and religion; between the ways we think about art and the ways we think about religion: (1) both lie outside the domain of science, i.e.,we can no more design an
experiment to gather evidence that a painting by Picasso is objectively beautiful than we can design an experiment to determine the existence of the God of Classical Theism; (2) both art and religion invite us to examine ourselves and to think carefully about our values, priorities and choices; (3) both raise a lot of questions about what it means to be human, what we want, how we relate to ourselves, one another and the world and how we evaluate ourselves and the world around us; (4) both religion and art make use of symbols; they both use imagery to evoke a response within our minds and hearts; (5) both have a heavy emotional component and both can challenge the dominance of reason and rationality; and (6) both religion and art have forms that may be understood to function as devices of escapism and forms that seek to challenge and transform the human community in positive, life-affirming ways. Perhaps religious language is a kind of artistic language or perhaps art is the expression of true religion? What do you think? We will continue our exploration in future homilies. Blessings!

Sources:
1. Aesthetics: Crash Course in Philosophy #31 (the source for most of this homily) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDL4Zf2yEa4
Faith as Participation
by the Rev. Richard Rohr

Many scholars have pointed out that what is usually translated in Paul’s letters as “faith in Christ” would be more accurately translated as “the faith of Christ.” It’s more than a change of prepositions. It means we are all participating—with varying degrees of resistance and consent—in the faith journey that Jesus has already walked. We are forever carried inside of the “Corporate Personality” that Jesus Christ always is for Paul (citations too numerous to count!). That’s a very different understanding of faith than most Christians enjoy.

Most people think having faith means “to believe in Jesus.” But, “to share in the faith of Jesus” is a much richer concept. It is not so much an invitation as it is a cosmic declaration about the very shape of reality. By myself, I don’t know how to have faith in God, but once we know that Jesus is the corporate stand in for everybody, we know we have already been taken on the ride through death and back to life. All we can do now is make what is objectively true fully conscious for us.

Remember, it’s God in you that loves God. You, on your own, don’t really know how to love God. It’s Christ in you that recognizes Christ. It’s the Holy Spirit, whose temple you are (see 1 Corinthians 3:16), that responds to the Holy Spirit. Like recognizes like. That’s why all true cognition is really recognition (“re-cognition” or knowing something again). Only so far as you have surrendered to Christ and allowed the Christ in you to come to fullness can you love Christ. It’s Christ in you that recognizes and loves Christ.

“Faith” is not an affirmation of a creed, an intellectual acceptance of God, or believing certain doctrines to be true or orthodox (although those things might well be good). Such intellectual assent does not usually change your heart or your lifestyle. I’m convinced that much modern atheism is a result of such a heady and really ineffective definition of faith. Both Jesus’ and Paul’s notion of faith is much better translated as foundational confidence or trust that God cares about what is happening right now. This is clearly the quality that Jesus fully represents and then praises in other people.

God refuses to be known intellectually. God can only be loved and known in the act of love; God can only be experienced in communion. This is why Jesus “commands” us to move toward love and fully abide there. Love is like a living organism, an active force-field upon which we can rely, from which we can draw, and which we can allow to pass through us. I am afraid you can believe doctrines (e.g., virgin birth, biblical inerrancy, Real Presence in bread and wine, etc.) to be true and not enjoy such a radical confidence in love or God at all.

From “Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation”
https://email.cac.org/t/ViewEmail/d/2630C814C6A0C8AA/DF3A7DAAE740B2109A8E73400EDACAB4
Cerro del Oro and San Lucas, Guatemala Vision Expedition
June 7-16, 2019
Join us on an expedition to Lake Atitlan, where you will experience the beauty of Guatemala and serve the communities in Cerro del Oro and San Lucas! No experience necessary, we will train you!

Local Volunteer Opportunities
March 15, 2019
Volunteer at our monthly vision clinic in Park City and help us give quality eye exams and new prescription eyeglasses to those that don't have insurance.

May 18, 2019
Travel with us to the Goshute Reservation located 60 miles south of Wendover to serve tribal members with vision care services.

Bwindi, Uganda Vision Expedition
August 7-22, 2019
This is an experience of a lifetime! Join our group as we navigate through the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest to serve rural areas with eye exams and glasses! Optional activities include trekking to see Silver-back Gorillas and learning about the Batwa Pygmies. No experience necessary.

For more information go to www.thehopealliance.org
There are more Expeditions, Go to the website and see how else you can help.
SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER:
LAST CHANCE: we still need a volunteer to lead St. Luke’s Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. Shrove Tuesday falls on March 5th this year, Katherine Martz, who has organized the dinner for several years is unable to do so this year but is available to assist in planning. Please contact Katherine at katherinemartz@comcast.net if you are interested.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: You will find info about our church and what to expect when you visit. ww.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.

ST. LUKE’S CARE GUILD: If you or someone you know has any requests or needs, please contact Katherine at katherinemartz@comcast.net or Harriet, harriettmstephens@gmail.com, (435) 655-1888.

MISSIONS TABLE: If you have any items to donate, please place it on the table. If you have a holiday themed item (e.g. Christmas, Easter, 4th of July, fall themed, etc) please place that item UNDER the table. Please, no electronics, we often end up paying to have them recycled when no one wants them, and we won't really have the space for books. All items will continue to be offered for voluntary donation only. Lastly, donation receipts are available from the church office. Or, contact Bonnie Brown. Thank you for your support!

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

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.

ALL HANDS AND HEARTS, PUERTO RICO
To all who were interested in going to Puerto Rico: We weren’t able to pull off going as a group. However if you would like to go as individuals, please contact them directly through their website: allhandsandhearts.org. There are places other than Puerto Rico too. Thank you to all who expressed interest.

WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY: The next women's study will be "The Problem of Pain" by CS Lewis. We meet Wednesday evenings 6:30-8 pm in the library and will be using the study guide by Alan Vermilye for this study. The study will run from Wed. 2/20/19 through Wed. 4/24/19. Please contact Mary Parsons at Mary.Parsons@hsc.utah.edu if you would like to join us!

THE CHAPEL IS LOOKING FOR TWO MORE CHALICE BEARERS: John Hoener will gladly train someone at the pub of their choice on how to hold a wine glass, as well as what a Chalice Bearer does. Please help if you can.

AUTUMN GOSPEL GROUP FOR WOMEN 50ish & UP: Autumn Gospel meets the fourth Saturday morning of each month from 10 to noon, in members' homes. We use books as a springboard to share and discuss our own spiritual journeys at this stage of our lives. We are reading "Character is Destiny: Inspiring Stories Every Young Person Should Know and Every Adult Should Remember" by John McCain and Mark Salter (2005). Please join us for coffee, fellowship and a lively discussion! For more info please call Nancy Conrow, nancy.conrow@gmail.com or 435-640-0556.

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.