

THE PIEDMONT EPISTLE

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS BY WORD AND DEED

February 2018

Ecce quam bonum

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This past weekend, many in our country watched, either at home or in the stands, the huge annual sports competition known as the Super Bowl. For many, including one of my colleagues, it was an amazing experience. The energy in the stadium was astonishing, he said — from the tens of thousands of people enduring the subzero temperatures to enter Minneapolis' US Bank Stadium, to the supreme technical presentation of the event itself, to the terrific game, the event was an awe-inspiring display. But it was more than that, my colleague observed: "It was a moment of unity in a culture of polarization. Eagles fans and Patriots fans sat side-by-side, and cheered opposing teams, and everybody essentially got along."



More than that, the loudest cheers of the night came not for the actual game but for the National Anthem and for a presentation featuring Medal of Honor winners. Another major ovation came later in the game when the NFL showed a video honoring the Air Force; yet another ovation came when individual veterans were asked to stand and be honored.

Most remarkable, however, was that, after the game, Eagles coach Doug Pederson thanked Jesus, Eagles backup quarterback and Super Bowl MVP Nick Foles held his baby and thanked God, and the crowd cheered.

Even after the game, my colleague said, Patriots fans and Eagles fans huddled together in the Mall of America. There was no feeling of anger or upset, no feeling of serious disappointment. Everyone was excited to have watched a historic game with a bunch of other people united in their love of the sport and of country.

Now, it is no secret that I'm not much of a sports fan. But even I recognize that these displays are important and useful. Those displays unify us, make us all feel like we're part of the same team, even when we're rooting for different teams. Sports, as a form of play-acted conflict, are a great way to remind us that most of the conflicts we experience in this country *are* somewhat artificial. Yes, there are real political questions that divide us. But there's far more than unites us than divides us.

But the Superbowl is only one event, something that happens once a year, and its effects are ephemeral. The camaraderie that my colleague witnessed in Minneapolis was unique to that one night, and pretty quickly afterward politicians, late night hosts and pundits went right back to bickering and name-calling. And the city of Philadelphia set itself on fire. Back to normal.

This shouldn't surprise us, as the love of football or of a nation is not substantial enough to sustain a real unity or love of neighbor over an extended period of time. The objects of such loves, football or country, are "lesser goods," St. Augustine of Hippo would say, and are therefore not powerful enough, not uniting enough. What is needed is a "transcendent good," an "ultimate good," namely God; God is the only "good" that is sufficient to unite us and keep us together. It is the love of God, not any lesser thing, that is alone able to unite peoples from across cultures and languages and races, and enable us to live together in harmony.



Ecce quam bonum: "Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) That is the motto of my alma mater (University of the South) and it remains the vision for Christian community—a people who display the godness and pleasantness of love for one another, that all the world might see and be inspired. That was what actually happened in the early church. The church father Irenaeus (130-202AD) said that the pagans would exclaim of Christians, "Look . . . how they love one another (for they themselves [pagans] hate one another); and how they are ready to die for each other (for they themselves are readier to kill each other)." As it was in Irenaeus' day, so it remains today—love for one another is a witness, for it shows what the Good News of Christ.

This month, February, is known as the "month of love." But whereas the rest of society is buying chocolates and flowers and celebrating romance, we have an opportunity to show the world what true love is—a love that lays down his life for others, love that was demonstrated, embodied in Jesus. St. Paul describes was thinking of Jesus when he sang of love's virtues: "love is patient and kind...does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) Such love impels us to think the best of others, requires us to forgive hurts done to us, compels us to seek reconciliation when we've wronged someone, and empowers us to resist temptation and do the right thing—the very things that enable us to live together in Christian community.

This month we also begin the season of Lent, the forty days of devotion and self-examination that we undertake in anticipation of Christ's resurrection at Easter. As we prepare ourselves for that joyous celebration, I invite you to consider your part in the Christian community, to reflect on how you are loving your neighbor, and to work with the Spirit to more fully embody God's love in our community. How good and pleasant such love is...and how compelling!

Yours in Christ,

W Terry Miller

Shrove Tuesday

Tuesday, February 13, 6pm

Join us at the parish house for the burning of the palms and the feasting on pancakes and other goodies, as we "clean out" space in our hearts for the season of Lent!



Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 14, 12 & 7pm

In keeping with the ancient tradition of beginning the season of Lent with the Imposition of Ashes, Piedmont will hold two Ash Wednesday services this month—a solemn service at 12 noon and choral service at 7:00pm. Invite and encourage your friends and family to participate.

Lenten Series

Practicing Our Faith: Spiritual Practices for the Christian Life

Wednesdays, 6pm, February 21-April 1 in the Parish House

For many, Christianity is a matter of beliefs. Yet from its beginning, Christianity has been about more than belief and has presented itself as a way of life. And central to the Christian way of life are the classic spiritual 'practices' or disciplines, shared activities that developed over time to integrate faith into daily life. As part of this Lenten series, we will be exploring seven such classic Christian practices and considering three other possible "postmodern" practices. We'll explore each practice in depth by placing it in its historical and biblical context, reexamining its relevance to our times, and showing how it gives depth and meaning to daily life. Join us as we explore these ancient practices and rediscover their relevance for today.



February 21	Introduction to Spiritual Practices
February 28	Cultivating a Hunger for God
March 7	Holy Reading
March 14	Making Room for God
March 21	Living With God

PRAYER JOYS & CONCERNS

We offer prayers of healing for friends and family:

Sarah Aloumouati	Cynthia Gerstner	Susan Muston
Melvin Amos	Carrie Gilles	Donna Nettles
Corey Barker	Jacob Good	Amanda Paff
The Barksdale Family	Griff & Vera Griffin	Sara Parmenter
Emily Begovitch (Kathy Henken's niece)	Stanley Griffin (Vera & Griff's son)	Maria Rosenberg
Nicky Bourgeois (Doris Lackey's friend)	Mary Haley	Myia MacKenzie Shifflett
Fran Bowers	Reggie Hall (Barbara Straightiff's brother-in- law)	Ann Skidmore
Jean Brashears	Chloe Hammer (Jean Kane's sister)	Lorraine Sandifer
Max Brown (Sue Burnett's friend, 4-y.o.)	Luke Harbert,	Jacqueline Smith
Lanee Butler	Sue Lam	Judy Taylor (friend of Kathy Henken)
Jane Cameer	Ted and Rene Hinds	Betty Thomas (friend of Barbara Straightiff)
Doris & Roland Chapman	Skip McDanolds	Matt Tsun
Sandra Clore (Waltine Robinson's niece)	The Hitt family	Robert Ulrich
Heather Comer	Tammy Kelliher	Bernie Valdez
The Cox family	Ren LeVally (Dink's son)	Donna Whitman (friend of the Griffiths)
Harley Cronk	The Miller Family	Augusta Woodward
David Cronk	Ruby Minick (grandmother of a friend of Kay John)	Kimberley Yarbrough (friend of Sherry Spencer with an auto- immune disease)
Sara DeLaurentis (Sue Burnett's niece)	Rosalie Mow (Doug's mother)	Alex Yowell
The Filmore Family	Susan Mowchan	Jeff Yowel
Patrick & Sean Fohner	Dorothy Mudd	
James Gardiner		
Lisa Gardner		

We offer prayers of healing and God's loving presence for friends living in nursing home care:
Barbara Kiley and Jane Chapman.

We pray for peace and the restoration of people's safety and dignity in Philippines, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Iran, Sudan, West Africa, and the Congo.

We pray for the men and women in the armed services, especially Mike Butterworth, Patrick DaSilva, Graham Davidson, Sean Hegg, R.E. Hutton, Nathan Kinkey, Brian Mainwaring, Jeffery Mainwaring, Todd Mainwaring, Anthony Mark, and Clay Puryear, and for our first responders. We pray for our presiding bishop, Michael Curry; our bishops, Shannon Johnston, Susan Goff, Ted Gulick, the churches of the Diocese of Virginia, and for our 70 million brothers and sisters in our 30 member Hill Anglican Communion.

We pray for the families in Barbara's House; for the work of Madison Emergency Services Association, Madison Free Clinic, Literacy Council of Madison County, Boy's and Girl's Club of Madison, Senior Nutrition Site, Madison County Education Foundation, Boy Scout Troop 116, and Madison Strong.

We pray for our youth in college: Nick Bader, Josh Good, Isabella Hansen, Sam Landolt, Paul Jackson, Peter Thawngzauk, Jacob Young, and Nathan Young.

We give thanks to God for all the families in this blessed Piedmont Church, and especially for the work God has done in the life of Peter Bank, in his recovery from surgery. Gracious Lord, guide, preserve and protect your servants as they create for your glory a holy family of love. May their love for each other be a sign of your tender care.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday 9:45 a.m. Shepherd's Way (Sunday School)
 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II
 11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hour in the parish house
Monday 7:00 p.m. Adult study group at the McDowell's home
Wednesday 10:00 a.m. Community Book Discussion
Thursday 7:00 p.m. Bible Fellowship – parish house

If you know of someone who is unable to get to church, but would like to receive communion, please let Father Terry or Deacon Kathryn know and they will arrange for a visitation.

MESA food donations - Please bring a can, bag, bottle, or box of non-perishable food item. Thanks for your generosity.

After much work and wait, we are excited to debut the new website for Piedmont Episcopal Church: <http://www.piedmontepiscopalchurch.org/>

Graves Chapel News

Good morning folks.....I hope all is good with you and your families and that all is going well.

Our next Evening Prayer service will be Sunday February 25, 2018--at 4:00pm.

We hope to see you and continue with our kick off for this new year.

Graves Chapel is located at 104 Bluff Mountain Rd. Graves Mill (Madison), Virginia.

Everyone is welcome! Bring your neighbors, and any additional friends and/or guests...

Should you have special prayer requests or needs, please feel free to contact our Lay Preacher Susan Bagby.

Additionally, Susan can offer you spiritual direction. She is counselor and is certified as a spiritual director. There are no fees associated with her professional services however she does request a donation be made to Graves Chapel.

Please feel free to contact Susan at:

Susanhbagby@gmail.com or,

Telephone---434.978.1627