

THE PIEDMONT EPISTLE

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS BY WORD AND DEED

January 2018

The Problem with the Future (and the Past)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

With Christmas Day behind us, all that remains of the holiday season is one last festive fling called New Year's Eve. When I was a child, my mother and I would stay up to watch the ball drop on television, and I'd marveled at the sheer spectacle of so many people massed together in Times Square. But if you stop and think about it, this seems an awful lot of fuss for what, practically speaking, is little more than an excuse to buy a new calendar!

Now I realize New Year's celebrations are about much more than that. New Year's is about putting last year behind us, with its achievements and disappointments, and starting afresh with a new year. Yet even with all our hopes and resolutions, it's natural to wonder what the new year will hold—will it be better than the last year, or will it be worse?

I was speaking with a friend recently, and I was struck by her irrepressible optimism about the future, not so much her own but of society's. From past conversations, I know that, to her, the past is an evil time—a time of suffering, injustice, and general backwardness, a time characterized by sexism, racism, and bigotry—blights that continue to live on in the present. The future, then, was where she lodged her hope. Through social reform, the evils of the past can be eradicated and a brighter future can be realized.

This is the flipside of my other friend. This friend sees the past as a kinder, gentler time, a time of greater social cohesion and of virtue. Rather than break with it, the past is something he wants to get back to, to recover. He is suspicious of proposals to reform society, not because he reflexively resists change, but because he fears that large-scale social changes will have unintended negative consequences. If reforms are to be attempted, and sometimes they must, then they must be small in scale, incremental in pace and firmly grounded in past experience.

These attitudes of my friends are pretty extreme, I recognize, and it shouldn't surprise you if their attitudes feed into their admittedly strident political worldviews—'progressive' and 'conservative,' respectively. Few people, though, ascribe to either of these perspectives absolutely. Few who consider themselves conservatives, like my second friend, wish to stop progress entirely. Rather, in the pursuit of progress, they want to preserve certain values thought to be broadly


shared in the past—values like sanctity, personal responsibility, respect for authority, and loyalty to family, community, and nation. At the same time, few who consider themselves progressives, like my first friend, reject these values outright. Rather they are concerned that these values do not get in the way of the pursuit of justice, equality and inclusion. Indeed, most of us, I suspect, hold to some combination of “conservative” and “progressive” perspectives towards the future. There are some things we want to change, to improve upon, and others we want to preserve.

Really, the problem for us Christians is not whether we have a “conservative” or “progressive” outlook. Christians throughout history have been alternately conservative and progressive, depending on the context and issues of the day. The problem is rather that, both positions look to a period of time—one to the past and the other to a preferred future—as the norm for our behavior. They both seek a utopia, a golden age, in which to establish our values, and as such are both indebted far more to culture than to anything transcendent. Standing alone, conservatism and progressivism are both insufficient and even idolatrous, looking as they do to some standard other than God’s.

For us Christians, we must decide what in our culture is worth conserving and what needs to be rejected so that we can progress beyond it. These sorts of decisions must be made, not with regard to “the way things used to be” or out of a concern about being “on the wrong side of history,” but based upon Christian worldview convictions. To promote human flourishing in a robustly Christian manner, we must not embrace American versions of conservatism and progressivism *en toto*. Instead, we want to “pair” our preferred political ideology with the transcendent truths of Christianity, allowing those truths to reform our ideology—even if we still come to different conclusions.

Now this may seem like a strange topic to bring up, as we head into the new year. But a concern for human flourishing—determining what makes for it, promoting it, working towards it—is something that should always be on our minds as Christians. We believe that we have something unique, something valuable to add to the political and moral discussions, something that you can’t get from other quarters. What we bring to the table is the vision of human flourishing that is given to us by Jesus Christ. That vision—and the commitment to embody it collectively, together—is something that the world desperately needs to see. So, this next year, as we go about our days—at the office, the courtroom, the showroom and the living room—I encourage you to reflect upon that question—what makes for human flourishing—and to inquire what wisdom, what beauty might be found within the Christian tradition to answer that question. And may that wisdom, that beauty guide your own life as you share it with others.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "W Terry Miller".

The Rev. W. Terry Miller



Annual Parish Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 28th at 11:30am

Vestry Elections · Budget Approval · Fellowship ·

Please Join Us!

*"Let us pray that God continues to work in this place – for the spiritual growth of us all
and for the good of the community around us."*

Worship Calendar

January 7—Feast of the Baptism of our Lord

January 14—Second Sunday of Epiphany

**January 21—Third Sunday of Epiphany
Vestry Meeting**

**January 28—Fourth Sunday of Epiphany
Annual Parish Meeting**

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
Lance 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.

Graves Chapel News

Our next Evening Prayer service will be Sunday
January 28, 2018--at 4:00pm.

We hope to see you to help kick off the *new year*.

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

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

Additionally, Susan can provide to you spiritual
direction, as a spiritual counselor, in that she is a
certified 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

Church Service Volunteer List January 2018

	7 th	14 th	21 st	28 th
Lector	Colt Puryear	Sue Brown	Reggie Dale	Rita Dellenger
Intercessor	Kathryn Thomas	Bob Nowak	Eve Bargmann	Norris John
Acolyte/ Crucifer	Annika Burnside	Molly Sanford	Amanda Dale	Beth Roireau and Thomas Dale
Chalice	Kathryn Thomas	Bob Nowak	Eve Bargmann	Norris John
Usher	James Maloney	Nick Spencer	Colt Puryear	Briarley Rogers
Vestry Person	Beverly Young	Hardie Newton	Pat Roberts	Jim Landolt
Social Hour				
Altar Care	Dink Kreis, Carol Nowak, and Vickie Parker			