



The Beacon

News and events from
St. Christopher's Community Church
Olympia, WA

2017 March

A message from Fr. James

Martin Luther and the Monasticism of All Believers

Our study for Lent this year is the book *40-Day Journey with Martin Luther*. I have chosen this book as part of our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation (1517-2017). Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk and priest prior to the Reformation. During the Reformation his call changed. Luther became more a Doctor of the Protestant Church (much the same as St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Teresa of Ávila are considered Doctors of the Church by Roman Catholics) rather than monk and priest. However, in his writings readers can still detect his latent monasticism. And perhaps if Dr. Luther overtly argued for *the priesthood of all believers*, then I contend his spiritual teachings subtly argue for *a monasticism of all believers*.

The word *monastic* derives from the Greek *monazein*, meaning to live alone. The purpose of the Christian solitary life was to limit distractions in order to intensely focus on imitation of Christ, on union with God, and the on daily spiritual struggle. Over time various kinds of monastics evolved – anchorites, hermits, monks, friars, nuns, etc. And yet all kinds of monastics were united by three things:

1. the attempt to live a Christ-centered life in a different way than society;
2. at least three vows they took – typically poverty, celibacy, and obedience;
3. and by living under a set of guidelines called a 'Rule' created by a former spiritual master – typically St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. Basil, or St. Francis.

Luther's reformation response to these were as follows:

1. all Christians are called to put Christ at the center of their lives

2. all Christians take vows to follow Christ when they are Baptized
3. and Holy Scripture is the Rule of the Christian community, the Church.

As such monasticism in Luther's perspective is not *living alone* but *living for Christ alone*.

In Luther's day at least the veneer of *living for Christ alone* was laudable. He lived in a "Christian society" where, at the very least, lip service was given to Christ and his teachings as the core values of society. Saying that one was Christian or wanted to live according to Christ would have been met with the overt praise and acceptance of society. Today such a declaration is often met with patronization, indifference, skepticism, or open hostility. We do not live in a Christian society any longer. Consequently, living a truly Christ-centered life makes all of us look like nuns and monks – people set apart, a bit different or maybe just outright weird by worldly standards. We are not different because our goal is to be different. The source of our difference is our goal to be authentic followers of Christ and society has very, very different goals than Christ.

My point is this: if we're going to be Christians in a non-Christian society we're going to be different. Christ is our center, our mono-focus. That's what makes us monastics - singular-centeredness on Christ. We live for Christ alone. And therefore the rich guidance in the monastic traditions of the past, including Luther's Augustinian monastic influence, is a treasure-trove of guidance for the modern Christian.

For specifics on the Augustinian influence found in Martin Luther's writings see the accompanying article and others to follow.

Fr. James Thibodeaux +

Easter Lilies Sign-up

With an occasional dusting of snow lately, it's difficult to imagine that Easter is almost here, but trees are budding and bulbs are sprouting!

In keeping with the tradition of St. Christopher's Church, potted lilies will adorn the sanctuary for Easter, and you can help! The Altar Guild typically purchases 15-20 potted lilies, but two to three weeks prior to Easter, we put up a sign-up sheet for members of the congregation to donate \$15 toward a plant you can call your own after Easter!

Please look for the sign-up sheet around the last week in March. On the sign-up sheet, you'll have the opportunity to offer the donation and plant as a celebration or memorial.

We do not want the \$15 to be a hindrance for anyone from signing up for an Easter lily. If you'd like to sign up for a lily as a "celebration" or "memorial", but can't offer \$15, please see Fr. James. The \$15 is merely a target amount to help cover the cost of the lilies.

Also, later in the spring, early summer, look for white lilies in the church garden. The potted Easter lilies can be planted for summer blooming for years to come!

If you have any questions about signing up for Easter lilies, please see Marilyn Walther.

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee is a ministry that is multi-functional and listed below are just a few of our discussions and decisions. If you would like to be involved, come join in at our meetings usually held the 2nd Sunday of the month following coffee hour. If this sounds like something you would like to learn about or participate in, please contact Marcia Rugg at ruggmbeach@comcast.net or [360-866-7249](tel:360-866-7249) or Father James. Your input and ideas are always welcomed.

Did you know???

Did You Know...?

- The word Lent shares the same root as the word "Lengthen"? It refers to the lengthening of daylight in the Spring.

- The 40 Days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday and end on Easter. Sundays are not included as all Sundays are considered "little Easters" and a time for rejoicing.

- 46 people received Ashes on Ash Wednesday? We offered ashes at Island Market from 7-9am and 4-6pm, plus we had a 7pm service.

- During Lent we are having a study using the book "40 Day Journey with Martin Luther." Discussion are on Sunday morning at 9am (coffee served) and Wednesdays at 6pm (simple soup dinner served)

- God loves you no matter what? In Lent you may be surprised about what you find within yourself, but you do not surprise God. All your strengths and foibles are known and has always and will always love you totally and completely!

Luther's Monastic Prayer

"I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray... First, when I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer because of other tasks or thought,... I take my little Psalter, hurry to my room or... to the church where a congregation is assembled, and... I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some psalms, just as a child might do." - Martin Luther quoted in 40-Day Journey with Martin Luther, p. 25.

"It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night..." - ibid., p. 26

Dr. Martin Luther's spirituality was deeply shaped by monastic practice. Seven or eight times a day nuns and monks gather for prayers as a community. If one could not come to the assembly it was expected that an individual would do the same prayers or an abbreviated form on their own at the same time, thus still participating in the prayers of the community although separated by space. In the above quotes we see Martin Luther continuing that emphasis.

At the center of mastic prayer was the prayerbook of the Bible, the Psalms. In the Rule of St. Augustine , subsection *Ordo Monasterii*, 2, it says, "At morning prayer let three psalms be said: the [sixty-third], the fifth, and the [ninety-first]. At the third hour let one psalm first be said responsorially, then two antiphons, a reading, and then the closing prayer. Let prayers be said in a similar fashion at the sixth and ninth hours..." The Psalms acted as prayer, scripture, and song all rolled into one.

We see the importance of the Psalms to Luther. In the brief instruction on prayer above, the only book Luther grabs his Psalter, that is his book of Psalms written out for singing and recitation, and hurries off to find a place of prayer, either private or communal. That he scurries

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to a separate place for prayer also smacks of the monastic practice of having a cell, an oratory, and/or a chapel in which to pray.

Next, notice that he prioritizes a recitation of the Ten Commandments and the Creed. These, along with the Lord's Prayer, function as a monastic Rule for Martin Luther. In St. Augustine's Rule, the rule of Martin Luther's order, in the *Praeceptum* subsection 8.2 Augustine says, "And so that you may be able to look at yourselves in this little book as in a mirror it should be read to you once a week ..." Luther had been taught to read, re-read, and reflect repeatedly on the monastic Rule. His reform was to place the Ten Commandments and the Creed [and the Lord's Prayer as seen *Luther's Small Catechism*] as the basic Rule for all Christians. These he would read, re-read, and reflect on repeatedly, as he had done under St. Augustine's Rule.

Finally, Martin Luther condenses the seven to eight times of daily monastic prayer down to twice daily for normative Christian practice. You can see again his emphasis on morning and evening prayer in the *Small Catechism*. There, just as in monastic practice, morning prayer is for praise, learning, and dedication to God's purposes. Evening is for reflection, confession, forgiveness, and rest.

In short, Dr. Luther left his monastic Order as part of his protest and reform. He may have ceased being a monk as evidenced by his marriage to Katherine, although you could argue the opposite also. But certainly, as evidenced in his prayer life, Luther didn't cease being monastic in his approach to Christian spirituality. In fact, to follow Luther's instruction leads one into Protestant monastic spirituality.

All quotations of St. Augustine's Rule are taken from the translation by Sr. Agatha Mary, S.P.B. and Gerald Bonner as found in Saint Augustine: The Monastic Rules edited by Boniface Ramsey, New City Press, ©2004.

Altar Guild Schedule

March	5-Mar	Lisa Andrew	Lent greens
Lent	12-Mar	Marilyn Walther	Lent greens
	19-Mar	Cindy Pitcher & Annette Edwards	Lent greens
	26-Mar	Bonnie Finn & Joyce Hanna	Lent greens

Bread maker: Shari Buelt

Save the dates!!

March 23, Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Food Bank distribution downstairs at the back door of the Church.

March 26, Sunday, 12 – 1:00 p.m. Congregational Training at the Church.

Lenten Soup & Study: Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. on 3/8, 3/15, 3/22, 3/29, 4/5. Join us for a simple meal and study of the "40 Day Journey with Martin Luther". Fr. James has books for purchase for \$15 each. The book is also available on Amazon.



St. Kits Guild

St. Kitt's Guild at St. Christopher's is rekindling. We had an organizational meeting on Sunday, February 26, attended by 9 women with enthusiastic ideas of what ministries they would like to see the women's group pursue. The top tier vote-getters were: social gatherings, outreach to groups/people in need in the community and selling St. Christopher t-shirts/sweatshirts. Following close behind were: hostessing receptions at the church and having a women's retreat. The group will meet on the fourth Sunday of each month. Women of the church, please join us March 22 after the service. Contact Debbie Whidden 866-1641 with any questions.

Sunday Volunteer Schedule

As many of you may know, our Sunday worship service needs the help of lots of regular church members (laypeople) – just like YOU– in order to run smoothly.

Volunteers are always needed for Altar Guild, Greeters (1 or 2), Acolytes, Readers, Eucharistic Minister, and Coffee Hour Host (1 or 2) throughout the month.

This is the March schedule as of Sunday, March 5. It's very easy to sign up. You can call the church office (360) 866-2111 or send an email to Tiff at office@stchristopherolympia.org.

	March 5	March 12	March 19	March 26
Altar Guild	Lisa Andrew	Marilyn Walther	Cindy P. Annette E.	Bonnie Finn Joyce Hanna
Greeter		Pat Simon Trude Andruss	Maggie Rydman	Pat Simon
Acolyte	Serenia Thibodeaux			Settle
Reader	Dixie Reimer		Suzann Stahl	Bob Buelt
Eucharistic Minister				Lee Murray
Coffee Hour Host	Buelt Family		Sherry Christianson	Chris Kelm

Prayer Shawls

The Chris Craft crafting group have been crafting, sewing, knitting and enjoying each other's fellowship for the past year. Among other projects, they would like to start providing prayer shawls for members of our community that may need support. Situations such as chronic health problems, treatments such as chemotherapy, support after a job loss or during a job search are a few examples. The prayer shawls can take many forms. They can be an actual shawl to provide warmth during treatment, a prayer square to keep in a pocket as a reminder of God's presence or a small lap sash. Requests for a prayer shawl are currently being accepted by Father James. Please direct any requests to him and he will forward them to the Chris Craft group.

The Chris Craft group meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month at 7:00 pm at Annette Settle's home, 4040 61st Ave. NW by Frye Cove Park. All are welcome!

The Group accepts donations and/or gift cards (JoAnne Fabric's, Annie's Quilt Shoppe - Shelton, Canvas Works - downtown Olympia, Black Sheep Yarn - Capital Mall Dr.).

Hospitality Committee

Do you love to cook? Are you good at coordinating a dinner or breakfast? Do you think events at St. Christopher's are better when we eat together? We are looking for a small group of volunteers to help provide set-up, clean-up and coordination of food and drink for meals. These events include Maundy Thursday Soup Supper, the breakfast between services at Easter or other meals as determined by the committee. This group would not be responsible for any outside activities such as weddings or funerals.

If you are interested, please contact Father James at the church office or Cindy Goldsmith at petvetcrg@gmail.com.



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Additional information is available on these websites:

www.lutheranssw.org
www.elca.org

To subscribe to the newsletter:
<http://bit.ly/SWWASynodNews>



Simple, Generous Choice

Did you know that *Electronic Giving* is now available at St. Christopher's Community Church? It is a very convenient way to provide financial support to our church. Please contact the church office to learn how you can participate!

Our Staff and Leadership

The Rev. James L. Thibodeaux, Pastor and Priest
The Rev. Patti Sells, Deacon
Tiff West-Schaub, Office Manager
Jeff Sprengel, Music Minister
Annaka Thibodeaux – Faith Formation Coordinator
Annette Settle - Bookkeeper

Bishop's Council (i.e. church board)

Greg Settle – Senior Warden
Mark Soetenga – Junior Warden
Carrie Bowen – Clerk
Tucker Smyth – Treasurer
Steve Andrew
Bob Buelt
Wyatt Finn
Bonnie Finn
Brian King
Pat Kelly
Damien Kolb

The Bishop's Council works with Fr. James and other leaders to develop and implement the shared mission and ministry of the congregation. The council especially oversees financial, business, and legal responsibilities of the congregation. Terms of service are three years. Council members commit to the following:

- support the mission of the congregation,
- faithfully attend monthly meetings

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- worship regularly at St. Christopher's
- actively pray for and participate in the life of the congregation.

All members "in good standing" at St. Christopher's who are over the age of 16 are eligible to serve. If you are interested in serving or would like to nominate someone to serve, please contact Fr. James.



Each month the Diocese of Olympia sends an email that contains interesting news you may be interested to read. Visit their website at www.ecww.org. To subscribe to the newsletter: <http://bit.ly/DioOlyNewsSignup>

St. Christopher's Events

Specific details regarding youth activities, committee meetings, men's breakfast, women's Chris Craft group, AA meetings and other events are available on the St. Christopher's Community Church website at: <http://bit.ly/StChrisCalendar>

Every Sunday:

9:00 Education Hour
 10:30 Sunday school (infant to 5th grade)
 10:30 Worship (Eucharist)
 Youth Group/Confirmation alternating Sundays
<http://bit.ly/StChrisYouthCalendar>

Monday and Wednesday:

8:00-Noon Church office open

Tuesday:

6:45 Centered Living
 2:30-5:30 Fr. James office hours

Thursday:

2:30-5:30 Fr. James office hours
 7:00 Choir practice

Please send your Beacon content to Suzann Stahl, Editor, no later than the 20th of the month priorstchrisbeacon@gmail.com

For the Children



Ministry Synopsis: Faith formation for children is accomplished through the integration of children into the community life of St. Christopher's through Sunday school, activities and worship.

Goal: In 2017 we will need 2 more teachers. A handful of regular nursery children will move up making the total number and developmental level of the children best for 2 classes.

Sunday school: Sunday school has 2 classes (preK-1st grade or 2nd-5th grade) from 10:30-11:15 on Sunday mornings September to May.

Special Sundays: The first Sundays of the month (Family Service) and Christmas/Palm Sunday/Easter there are no Sunday school classes so that families can worship together. During Family Services children can participate through noisy offering or by being readers, acolytes, greeters, musicians or flower arrangers. Please email your interest to Annaka.Thibodeaux@gmail.com.

Confirmation Classes: Fr. James is offering a confirmation class to middle school and high school youth interested in exploring their faith at a deeper level.

Please let Annaka Thibodeaux know if you have any questions.

Prayer for the Children: Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Save the date for the All-Church Campout



WHEN: July 13-16, 2017
 WHERE: Ocean City State Park, WA