



HOLY SPIRIT,
BREATH OF GOD,
BREATHE INTO ME.
TRANSFORM ME.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR/RECTOR
The Rev. Mike Wernick

In John 18:38, Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?"

If someone believes that only their race, or only their culture, or only their partisan political party, or only their family traditions, or only their sexual orientation, or only their denomination, or only their religion is true, it becomes that much more difficult to see God's unbounded unity amidst God's diversity. It becomes that much easier to hang on to our superiority and arrogance. To denigrate that which varies from it, or is different, or is Other. It becomes that much easier to deny them their basic human rights. To vilify or justify violence against that Other. To justify why the baptismal vows which we hold dear (to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being) don't apply to them.

Yet scripture contains many references to truth. In John 8:31, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

And we all want to be free, don't we? Not just free from the kind of slavery told about before the Exodus, or which precipitated this nation's Civil War; but free from addictions and self-destructive behaviors. Free from financial debt. Free from low self-esteem. Free from anything which minimizes or blocks the incarnate light which we just celebrated a few short weeks ago. And we are called, more and more, to take on the Mind of Christ. But this kind of change can be slow. This kind of change in our thinking can be difficult. But we cannot take hold of new ways of thinking, unless we let go of the old ways of thinking. Unless we stop being ignorant (choosing to ignore) other truths.

There's a powerful scene in the 1992 movie [A Few Good Men](#), when Lt. Daniel Kaffee (Tom Cruise) asks Col. Nathan R. Jessup (Jack Nicholson) if he ordered the Code Red which caused the death of Pfc. William Santiago. Kaffee says he wants the truth. And Jessup (after being somewhat masterfully goaded), screams back at him, "You

can't handle the truth!" And similarly (though I'm betting with no screaming) in John 16:12, Jesus tells the disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

But in this latter case, I think Jesus has made a subtle and powerful distinction. There are some truths which are far too threatening to the systems which oppose them; systems which would have to be almost entirely dismantled and rebuilt--made new--so they could seamlessly reflect those truths. But Jesus didn't say we'd never be able to bear them. Jesus didn't say we'd never be able to come to terms with them--just not now--just not yet. So go slow. Ease into it. It's going to take a long, long time. Yet we are an impatient people.

There are insights, though, which can assist us in seeing past the surface value of things and being far less impatient. In The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Louis Savary updates the Principle and Foundation first put forth by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. And this update provides a more cosmic perspective and time frame for God's plan to be completed:

You were created to make a unique contribution to the great evolutionary project initiated and continually supported by God; namely, bringing all creation together into one magnificent conscious loving union.

Since all other created things in the universe share with you this common eternal destiny, they are essential to and inseparable from you as you participate in the pursuit of that ongoing evolutionary process.

Individually, and joined with others, you are to use all means available to promote and carry out this shared purpose with all your personal creativity, compassion, and energy; always seeking and choosing what is more conducive to that purpose.

For this, God empowers you to grow in passionate love and care for all elements of the cosmos, since they, as you, all live and move and have their being in God's love.

And God is with you as you undergo whatever diminishment may befall you, as you cooperate with others in your efforts and actions in pursuing this divine project - the purpose for which we, individually and collectively, were created.

So as we begin 2019, let's remember to breathe, to "Let go, and let God," and try to be more willing to invite the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts and our actions. After all, we say "Your will be done" almost every week. Do we believe it?

The Rev. Mike Wernick

SCRIPTURE READINGS

January 6 - Epiphany of Our Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7,10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

January 13 - Baptism of Our Lord

Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 20 - Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

January 27 - Third Sunday after Epiphany

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Kim H. & Laura K.

Recent Events

Our **Be a Santa to a Senior and Share-a-Christmas** programs were a great success! Thanks to your generosity, 17 Kentwood senior citizens received gifts and two local families were blessed with gifts and groceries. Thank you to everyone who donated to these ministries and to the J2A group for making the deliveries!



The **Christmas offering** is being divided among Journey to Adulthood (J2A), Diaper Depot, and our adult English as a Second Language (ESL) program. We'll announce the amounts as soon as we know them and will also publish them in next month's newsletter.

Thanks to all who worked at **St. Mark's Breakfast Café** on December 30. Save the date: Our next workday will be Sunday, March 31.

Current/Upcoming Events



The **Super Bowl collection** of canned soups for **The Pantry** kicks off January 13 and runs through Super Bowl Sunday, February 3. Our **goal is 1,000 cans**, and we're anticipating an announcement from Rev. Mike about some fun "extra incentive" to collect even more. Watch for sales and let's score a touchdown against food insecurity!

Community Ministry's **next meeting** will be Thurs., January 10, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at Kim H.'s condo. Our meetings are open to everyone and **include a potluck dinner**. We are looking for new members. If you'd like to see what we're all about, please come! Just let Kim know you'll be attending so the meal can be planned accordingly.

Ongoing Programs

Don't forget our **"Noisy Offering"** (loose change offering, although paper currency is also gladly accepted) that we take in on the **first Sunday of each month**. This money is donated to **ACCESS of West Michigan**, a local ministry seeking to end poverty and food insecurity. Thanks to Kay S. for counting the donations every month.

The Pantry will soon be re-opening at its new location at 4301 Kalamazoo Avenue, S.E., Suite 25, the former site of Russo's Market! The grand re-opening date has had to be postponed but will be announced as soon as it is set. This month we are collecting **canned vegetables, canned fruit, and peanut butter**. We also continue to collect personal care items for The Pantry's clients, such as feminine hygiene products, toilet paper and other paper products, "ziplock" baggies, toothpaste, etc. These items cannot be purchased with Bridge Cards and can be costly, especially for someone already struggling with food insecurity. Watch for "BOGO" sales!

We continue to collect SpartanNash store receipts to reach the **Direct Your Dollars** goal of \$150,000 in qualifying receipts for the third time. Please remember that the entire receipt is needed and that e-receipts do not qualify. Once the goal is reached, Diaper Depot will receive another check for \$1,000. Let's fill up that truck!

The **Samaritas** collection of magazines (non-news-oriented preferred), greeting cards, artificial flowers, and fabric is on-going. Please place your donations in the far-right collection bin in the Narthex.

Volunteer Opportunities

The **Diaper Depot** can use your help! If you can assist at the scheduled distribution times, please sign up and lend a hand. If you prefer to volunteer on a Sunday, help is needed with re-packaging diapers. Please let Shirley N. know if you can help out with this important ministry.

The Pantry can always use volunteers! If you're interested, please see Kay S.

Warm Up America volunteers knit or crochet afghans for children entering foster care. These works of love go to children entering foster care, providing them with warmth, comfort, and something to call their own. If you're interested in participating, please see Kay S. Did you know that it takes at least four skeins of yarn to make one afghan? Donations of **washable** yarn (no wool, please) are always much appreciated and can be placed in the basket on top of the collection bins in the Narthex. If you purchase more than one skein at a time, purchasing two or more of the same color is most helpful.

Care Team Ministry

Help is available with rides, food, visits, communion, and calls. If you have a need, or know someone who does, please contact Laura K. or Rev. Mike.

DIAPER DEPOT **Judy M.**

Volunteers are need at the following distributions:

Thursday, January 3rd from 6-8 p.m.

Wednesday, January 16th from 10:00 a.m.- Noon

Please sign up on the bulletin board if you're able to help.



We began our third collection of Direct Your Dollar receipts for Diaper Depot on December 9th and already have over \$13,000. Please ask friends and family to contribute their receipts as well and we'll have this collection finished in record time!

Thanks for supporting Diaper Depot.

Here We Go Again!



A note of thanks!

Community Ministry would like to thank the parish of Two Churches for their wonderful support over the past year. 2018 was a busy year for outreach and we are grateful for this parish's generosity. Two Churches is truly a small church with a big heart. Your caring and participation, with time, treasure, and talent, in the programs offered around the calendar year, does help to make a difference in the lives of people in our community and the larger world. Community Ministry hopes for your continuing support in 2019. If you have ideas or have an interest in outreach work, please come to our meetings and check us out.

Community Ministry members wish everyone in the parish all the best in the upcoming year.

Peace,

Ann, Evans, Joel, Lisbeth, Kim, Laura, Shirley, Vivian, Liz, Kay, and Mary

Why Pledge?

Pledge cards were mailed out to all congregation members (Ascension, Holy Cross, or Two Churches) several weeks ago, and many have been returned to the treasurers. But not all. So what's the big deal with these things?

Lots of people contribute financially to church on a regular basis but never fill out a pledge card. Maybe you think it will "tie you down" to giving a certain amount, or that the church will "come after you" if you get behind. They won't, though if finances get tight, treasurers may put out a general plea for help. Maybe you just don't know what your financial situation will be or have income that fluctuates regularly so you just never know what you'll be able to contribute. That's okay – even a "best guess" is helpful. Or maybe you don't consider yourself "an official member" but just worship with us on a regular basis, so never considered filling one out. (btw, if you are a regular "visitor" and want to explore membership – please see Rev. Mike!).

Whatever the reason for not filling out a pledge card...here's the real scoop:

A pledge card is just your promise to TRY to help support the expenses of our worshipping community...to pay our staff and keep the lights and heat (or air-conditioning) on, to keep the parking lot paved and (hopefully) pothole-free, to provide for the raw materials needed to support our worship and our ministries to not only our own community but also the community around us. It's your best guess at what you plan to contribute. And if circumstances change for you and you need to change your pledge, that's okay too. Just let your treasurer know, if you can. But getting a pledge card from each of our "giving units" in each of our congregations is the basis for our yearly budget planning, which in turn helps ministry leaders plan activities and outreach for the year.

If you need a pledge card and did not receive one (or just need a new one...they are easy to misplace!), please see Judy in the office. Your help with this is greatly appreciated!

Thank you,
Council/Vestry Leadership



SUNDAY COFFEE SERVERS

Jan 6 Hannah T. & Sue R.
Jan 13 Jan S. & Barb C.
Jan 20 Congregational meeting followed by potluck
Jan 27 Robin G. & Viv R.

Feb 3 Laura K. & Agnes K.
Feb 10 Esther Y. & Marjri W.
Feb 17 Sara H. & Connie E.
Feb 24 Jill B. & Kathy T.

Mar 3 Gwen H. & Lisbeth A.
Mar 10 Liz R & Ann A.
Mar 17 Mary A. & Hannah T.
Mar 24 Jan S. & Barb C.
Mar 31 Sue R. & Robin G.

Apr 7 Viv R. & Laura K.
Apr 14 Agnes K. & Esther Y.
Apr 21 Marjri W. & Sara H.
Apr 28 Connie E. & Jill B.

Coffee Procedures

1. Make sure coffee has been made following the 8:00 am worship service.
2. Set out cups, carafes, treats (doesn't have to be elaborate!), creamer and sugar.
3. Heat water for tea, make tea in designated carafe.
4. Stay at table to help serve.
5. Wash dishes after coffee.
6. Take trash to dumpster.



If you cannot make a scheduled day, please swap with someone else on the list. Also, if you would like to volunteer, but don't see your name please let me know and I will add you to the schedule. Thank you!

Questions? Please contact Hannah T. at Hannah.c.temple@gmail.com



*May the Lord bless our
coming year with spiritual
growth, love for all people,
and many opportunities
to spread God's Gospel*

JANUARY PRAYER LIST

We want to pray with and for each other as we move along our spiritual journey together. Please lift up in prayer the designated persons throughout the week. May our Lord Jesus Christ use this ministry of prayer to build His Church in love!

Dec. 30-Jan. 5: John, Laura, David, Elizabeth and Sarah K.; Agnes K.; Kim L.; Chuck and Shelley M.; Joe and Donna M.

January 6-12: Rick and Judy M.; Meaghan and Matt M.; Shirley N.; Dick P.; Mary P.

January 13-19: June, Craig and Brian P.; Annette R.; Viv R.; Kathie R.; Clint and Liz R.

January 20-26: Sharon R.; Sue and Bob R.; James and Yvonne S.; Kay S.; Keith and Andy S.

Jan. 27-Feb. 2: Jan S.; John and Polly S.; Jeff and Jessica S.; Adam, Christie, Joshua, Leah and Michael S.; Brian and Kathy T.

Please remember also to pray for all troops stationed throughout the world.

January 10:00 AM Worship Servers

If you are unable to serve on your scheduled date, please switch with someone, and notify the office and Roy H. If you have any questions, please contact Roy at 616-915-6258 or at GrandRapidsMorris@comcast.net. Altar Server, unless otherwise noted, is Deacon Kim H.

January 6 - Epiphany of Our Lord

Readers: Charlie H. & Rich W.
Assisting Minister: Ann A.
Acolyte: Paul. K.

January 13 - Baptism of Our Lord

Readers: Jill B. & George D.
Assisting Minister: Esther Y.-P.
Acolyte: Beth B.

January 20 - Second Sunday after Epiphany

Readers: Kathy T. & Ann A.
Assisting Minister: Connie E.
Acolyte: Joshua S.

January 27 - Third Sunday after Epiphany

Readers: Dale H. & Dan W.
Assisting Minister: Lisbeth E.
Acolyte: Jill B.

JANUARY 2019 CALENDAR

Wed, Jan 2	10:00 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Holy Eucharist Bible Study
Thurs, Jan. 3	9:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	TOPS Diaper Depot Open Morris Dancers
Sun, Jan 6	8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	Worship w/o Music Worship w/Music
Mon, Jan 7	7:00 p.m.	Centering Prayer
Tues, Jan 8	7:00 p.m.	Worship & Music Mtg.
Wed, Jan 9	10:00 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Holy Eucharist Bible Study
Thurs, Jan 10	9:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 6:30 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	TOPS Community Ministry @ Kim's Happy Souls Morris Dancers
Sun, Jan 13	8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	Worship w/o Music Worship w/Music
Mon, Jan 14	9:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Sr. Foot Care Taize Service at St. Mary's
Wed, Jan 16	10:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Diaper Depot Open Holy Eucharist Bible Study

Thurs, Jan 17	9:00 a.m. 6:30 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	TOPS Happy Souls Morris Dancers
Sun, Jan 20	NO 8:00 a.m. worship 10:00 a.m. 11:15 a.m. 12:15 p.m.	Worship w/Music Annual Meeting Potluck
Mon, Jan 21	7:00 p.m.	Centering Prayer
Wed, Jan 23	10:00 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Holy Eucharist Bible Study
Thurs, Jan 24	9:00 a.m. 6:30 p.m.	TOPS Morris Dancers
Sat, Jan 26	10:00 a.m.	Warm-up America @ St. Matthew
Sun, Jan 27	8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.	Worship w/o Music Worship w/Music Newsletter Deadline, please submit articles to nl2churches@att.net
Mon, Jan 28	7:00 p.m.	Centering Prayer
Wed, Jan 30	10:00 a.m. 10:45 a.m.	Holy Eucharist Bible Study
Thurs, Jan 31	9:00 a.m. 6:30 p.m.	TOPS Morris Dancers