

Cluster Chronicle

"A community of Episcopal congregations sharing the love and power of the Risen Christ in our communities through worship, evangelization and apostolic service."

Stop that thing



Rev. Elizabeth Hoster

Stop that thing. Yes, *that* thing. That thing you hope no one knows about. I don't need to tell you---no one needs to tell you, and if they did, you'd get mad and lie about it anyway.

Stop that thing. That thing you said you'd stop. That thing that everyone you love is tiptoeing 'round. That thing that is causing you shame and guilt. That thing you use to comfort yourself. That thing that makes you feel so damned *alone*.

Stop that thing. It's killing you. It's killing your family. It's not killing God, but it's killing your side of your relationship with God. God is a mama bear, and you are her precious cub, and that thing---THAT THING---is in between you and her, and she will not stand for that.

Stop that thing. Nobody, *nobody* wants to bury you early or hide stuff when you come around or wince if they need to ask you a favor. No one wants to find your bad habit in a bottom drawer or under a car seat or on your phone or wherever the hell you keep that thing.

Stop that thing. That thing may have served a purpose or been a symptom of something that needs more truth and light. Even the apple served a purpose and the snake did tell a little truth. But that doesn't mean you need to keep making apple pie to feed that greedy snake.

Stop that thing, 'cause it's fixin' to blow. That feeling you feel, that it's all gonna come crashing down? That's just reality talking. That's just the light coming in. It's not punishment. It is truth. It's Jesus saying, "You don't have to die for this. I already did. I went out in the desert and I struggled with it, too. I am with you in this desert with that thing"

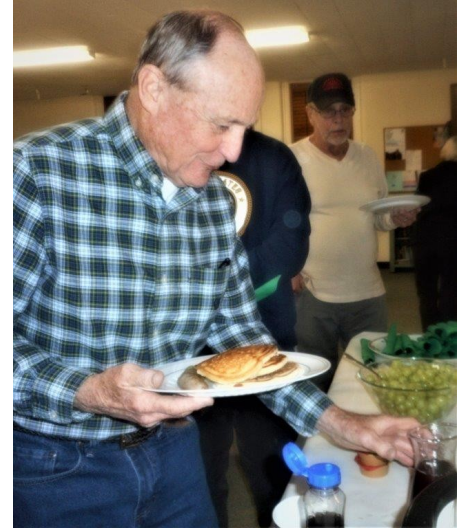
Stop that thing. It may not feel like it right now, but everyone is on your side and wants you to live. Put it in the trash, take it out right now before the truck shows up. Destroy the computer file. Cancel the account. Delete the contact. Now make the call. Go to the meeting at the church, the one in the basement. Didn't you know? When Jesus comes to church, he likes to use the basement door. Listen to others who have stopped that thing. They are everywhere. They, like you, are God's precious cubs.

Stop that thing. In case you haven't gotten it by now, here is the bottom line: you were not made to live with shame. You were made to live in light and truth and love. Mama bear's got your back and is fighting for your life. Jesus fought that thing so you could live. Countless folks around you stand ready to speak truth and love and help you fight that thing. You are not alone.

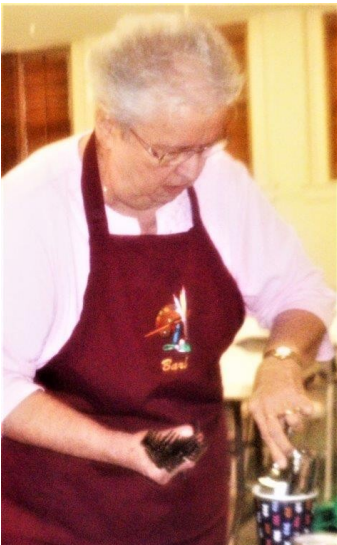
Now stop that thing, drop that thing, come on home, and live.

Shrove Tuesday revisited

Exalt and extol, applaud and acclaim! Ruth Vance and her crew, Sharon Applegate, Paddy Barr, Ed Hardin, Sally Johnson, Mary Neal Miller, Barb Renkert, Julia Robertson and Marc and Shary Stadler, welcomed about sixty guests to Epiphany's annual Shrove Tuesday pancake and sausage supper in February. Participants were delighted with meal (maple syrup a special treat) and were pleased to be invited to share this ancient tradition. Shrove Tuesday 2020 would have gladdened the hearts of those 15th century Christians whose pancakes and penance we still honor in our time.



Clockwise from top left: Several guests wore their Mardi Gras beads; a guest pours on the warm maple syrup; Jim Westfall (and Gloria) came from Our Saviour; event chair Ruth Vance, right, and Barb pause for the Chronicle camera with Shary in the background; young Skyler Johnson and his mother await the pancakes; Sandy and Mary Neal baked pancakes early and late; Barb arranges the buffet.



Seasons of the Church Year

Third in a series by Heather Angus

In the Episcopal/Anglican tradition, Lent is followed by
Holy Week or Passion Week

Palm Sunday

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. The procession with palms commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his path strewn with palm branches.

Midway in the liturgy, a stark change occurs and Jesus' triumphal arrival in the city turns into a dark drama.

Jesus is sought, identified, questioned and threatened by officials who ultimately arrest him. The color for Passion Sunday is red, the color of the blood of martyrs.

Maundy Thursday

The name Maundy is derived from the Latin for mandate, found in the liturgy for foot washing: "A new mandate I give to you, that you might love one another."

Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. At the close of the liturgy, all may kneel and sing, Go to Dark Gethsemane, recalling Jesus leaving the upper room for the Garden of Gethsemane. The altar is stripped of the symbols of God's presence and other ornamentation.

Good Friday

The Good Friday liturgy is one of the most moving of the year. Jesus dies on the cross and we begin the despair of the three days when our Lord was in the tomb.

We gather, often in darkness, perhaps wearing black, to share our pain with God who is no stranger to pain and death. The lights may be dimmed, we leave the service in silence to await God's resolution.

With gratitude to John

Kairos Devotional booklet *Prisoner to Prisoner* publishes messages written by prisoners for other prisoners. The winter issue carried a message akin to that of Rev. Elizabeth Hoster's article in this Chronicle. John's devotional is also for March 1. The coincidence is thought-provoking.

John writes "...Jesus is telling everybody plainly why He came into the world. If you believe in Him and the things He teaches, then you cannot live a life in darkness.

"Living in darkness is doing things that you don't want anyone to know about because they would bring shame to you, your family or even get you involved in the legal system.

"For many of us that are in prison and have come to know the Lord Jesus, it's very simply a case of

deep regret, from the bottom of our hearts.

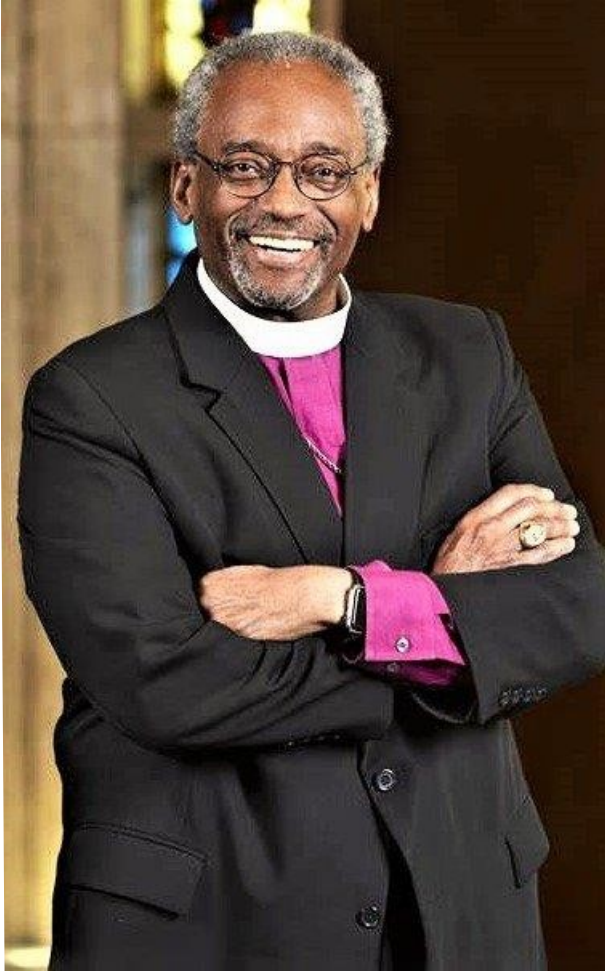
"GOD SEES EVERYTHING! There is actually nothing we get away with. Living in the light is so much better. It matters that you do the right thing!

"How much light is there in your life? Could you honestly say that there is nothing you don't want others to know that you are still doing? This simple question can convict the heart.

"Jesus died for all of us to be forgiven of these things, turn to Him and repent if you are holding back. God bless you all."

(Our Chuck Miller is a long-time participant in the work of Kairos and our copy of Prisoner to Prisoner comes through him.)

An invitation from Bishop Curry



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

The extraordinary personal faith of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry pours forth in his every word and action. In this excerpt from *Lent 2020: A Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Repentance Leading to Action*, he and the “elders” of Evangelical, Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant traditions fearlessly name that which sickens our nation and ask us to devote faith and action to its healing.

“In times of great national concern and urgency, people of faith have returned to ancient practices of repentance, prayer and fasting as ways of interceding with God on behalf of their nation and the world. This is such a moment for us in the United States.

“Our appeal comes during a time of profound division and genuine crisis of national character. This is not a matter of party or partisanship, but of deep concern for the soul of America. We can no longer pretend otherwise. This is a moment of spiritual peril and decision.

“The United States is in the midst of a struggle for its very soul. Are we merely collections of self-interest and parti-

san identities or are we “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all?”

“On one level, the outward and visible form of the divisions and tensions as a nation are political, social and even ideological. Yet, the deeper and invisible causes are spiritual and moral.

“When selfishness is exalted above sacrifice for the good of each other, the soul of the nation is at stake. When falsehood is exalted, and truth is slain in the public square, the soul of the nation is at stake. When toxic politics manipulates public faith, the soul of the nation is at stake. When fear, hate and violence shape our politics and anger governs our speech, the soul of the nation is at stake.

“In another time of national spiritual crisis, President Abraham Lincoln issued an appeal to leaders and people of the nation to summon “the better angels of our nature.” As elders in the churches, we believe that we are in a spiritual battle between our better angels and worst demons.

“Now is not a time for playing the superficial politics of right or left. Now is a time for deeper spiritual engagement with the realities that are beneath our conflicts in order that God might help and heal the ‘soul of the nation and the integrity of our faith.’” Bishop Curry continues with a call for prayer, fasting and repentance that will lead to action.

Prayer

“Prayer calls us to give up control. We pray to return to God’s two commandments on which hang all the law: ‘Love God with your whole heart, whole soul and whole mind’---which means to repent and remove any national, racial or political ideologies and idolatries that have replaced loving God with our whole selves.

“‘And love your neighbor as yourself’---which means to love all our neighbors we have forgotten to love (no exceptions), including those who are different from us, who disagree with us (even those in our congregations) and, especially, those of another race or nationality whom we are directly instructed to love by the words and example of Jesus.

Fasting

“Fasting calls us to redirect our attention. Fasting weekly (Wednesdays are suggested) can help us to stop, pay attention, wake up, interrupt our schedules, go deeper and listen for God and the Holy Spirit in ways that might lead us to new places in hearts and minds.

Repentance

“Repentance calls us to change our hearts. In all our traditions it means much more than shame or guilt and feeling sorry; it means to stop, turn around, and go in a whole new direction. These spiritual disciplines could help take us out of our strategies and control by admitting that we don’t have all the answers, and to go deeper together to hear the voice of God, often in the still, small whispers of the Spirit, leading us to better places. What are we called from and what are we called to? Who are we called from and who are we called to? What might praying and fasting open us to do?”

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,
against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,
against spiritual wickedness in high places. Ephesians 6:12, King James Version.*

Fireworks at Fifth Third Field



Ed's taking reservations, call soon

Winter weary? Picture yourself at Fifth Third Field on a soft, mid-summer evening, cheering on the Dayton Dragons, nibbling popcorn and sipping a cold drink. Dragons' Cluster Agent Hardin can make that a reality.

He has thirty free seats for the July 3 Dragons' game at 7 p.m. against the Bowling Green (Kentucky) Hot Rods with a sensational fireworks display to follow. Did we mention that it's free? No charge. Just walk in.

Ed is now taking names and it's first come, first served! Past Cluster excursions to Fifth Third Field have earned rave reviews. This may be the best Almost-Fourth-of-July celebration you ever attended.

Honor roll

Mechanicsburg Schools' second quarter honor roll includes some familiar names: Will Boeck, Cecilia Bradford, Emily Westfall and Gwen Westfall, all of Our Saviour. Gwen also earned another very rare distinction---that of Perfect Attendance! We are proud of your efforts and praise your loving families for their encouragement.

A surprise visit

Former members Anthony Ehresmann and Matt Loges appeared in their regular pew at Epiphany February 23 and were warmly welcomed. They still reside in Englewood and continue their work in human services. Matt now heads a facility in Columbus and commutes daily. Anthony responds to needs in the Dayton area.

Souper Wednesday for Purk and politics

Bill Purk, one of Champaign County's favorite country music headliners, warmed up a wintry February evening for Community Meal guests at Our Saviour February 26. That being Ash Wednesday, Rev. Melody Williams officiated at a 4 o'clock service in the sanctuary and was a special guest for supper. She went (very carefully) on to Urbana for a 7 o'clock Ash Wednesday service at Epiphany.

A smiling contingent from the Champaign County Democrat Central Committee dished up 77 servings of another favorite--homemade vegetable soup and cornbread made by Heather and Valerie---for those who ate at the church and for meals taken to folks throughout the Mechanicsburg community by They-Who-Deliver-In-Any-Weather, Vicki Rammel and Cindy Jenkins.

The cold and snow reminded that winter isn't over yet and Our Saviour's collection of outerwear---coats, jackets, hats, gloves, scarves---was available for browsing. Jodi Compton heads this annual project and has various outlets for the warm clothing.



Left: Valerie Smith serves Reverend Melody Williams soup and accompaniments. Other servers include, l to r, Suzanne McCoy, Cameron Tiefenthaler, Suzy Aukerman, Heather Tiefenthaler, Paul Aukerman and April Davis.

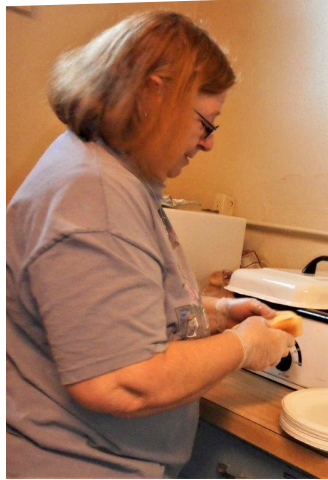


Country musician Bill Purk was the featured entertainment for the evening; members from the Champaign County Democrat Central Committee are Karen Wilson, Suzanne McCoy, Valerie Smith, Heather Tiefenthaler, Suzy Aukerman, Paul Aukerman and Amy Boeck.



Diverse universe

The plump hot dog in every fresh bun was the same, but from there on each sandwich became distinctive. Guests of Epiphany's February Community Meal proved a creative lot, accessorizing their hot dogs with endless combinations of the following: Jackie Barr's Coney Sauce, sauerkraut, Cole slaw, onions, cheese, pickle, mustard and catsup, potato chips and baked beans. The adventurous piled on all the plate would hold; purists savored their sandwiches unadorned. There were even requests for a hot dog without a bun and a bun without the meat!



Julia fills buns with hot wieners and hands off to Heather.

Did we mention the sweet finale of pecan and pumpkin pie, cookies and brownies? Heather Angus was on-site manager for this imaginative hot dog bar with plenty of help from Julia Robertson, Sharon Applegate, Paddy Barr and Mary Neal Miller.

Someone once speculated how boring the world would be if we were all the same; others have wondered how much diversity a country can handle, and can there be unity in diversity. You bet. This meal was truly a celebration of both. The basic hot dog was tuned to the tastes and appetites of men, women and children who represented a variety of occupations, ages, locations, talents and interests. As Paul told the Colossians "...in Him all things were created...and **in Him all things hold together.**" This day we were enriched by diversity and held together by His life and love.

Clockwise from top right: baked beans and Coney sauce are added by Paddy; Sharon serves the pies, cookies and brownies; Mary Neal assists with sandwich toppings.



Mark your calendars for March

March 2	Regular service schedule
March 8	Regular service schedule Vestry Meeting, Our Saviour, following service Daylight saving begins
March 15	Regular service schedule
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 18	Community Meal, Epiphany, 5-6 p.m.
March 22	Regular service schedule Vestry Meeting, Epiphany, following service
March 25	Community Meal, Our Saviour, 6 p.m.
March 29	Cluster Service, Our Saviour, 10 a.m.
March 30	Cluster Council Meeting, Epiphany, 5:30 p.m.
April 1	Worship Committee Meeting, Our Saviour, 5:30 p.m.
April 5	Palm Sunday, regular service schedule

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Sunday Worship Services: Our Saviour, 9:15 a.m., Epiphany, 11 a.m.

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