



THE ASCENSION

HERALD

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From the Rector

Stewart Tabb

I don't know about you, but I grew up in a "stiff upper lip" family. We were taught to keep our chin up and to soldier on. In many ways I appreciate the doggedness and stoicism of my upbringing; it has helped me carry on in the face of any number of adversities. And, in fact, I am fond of saying that I celebrate my inner pit bull. I do not give up easily, nor am I particularly good at letting go. As a result, I was almost 40 before I let myself experience grief -- that conglomeration of feelings that can include not only sadness, but anger and confusion as well.

It is not that I had not had occasion to grieve. My parents divorced when I was 13, my grandmother when I was 17, and the man whom I called my grandfather about 5 years later. I had been laid off from a job and alone in the city to which I had recently moved. Later, when I went off to seminary, there was a professor who went on and on about how important it was to grieve, not only people and lost relationships, but also the lives we had left to come to seminary. I thought she was crazy. I was wrong. But it was a lesson I learned slowly and needed to review many times in various seasons since then.

This has been one of them. Squeak the cat died almost four months ago and thinking about her still makes me cry. Delores Horn, with her sheer ebullience, in mid-January, and Jean Rutherford just this week; but her decline in the last couple of months was marked, and it saddened me so to see the Jean that I knew and loved fade away.

On the one hand my head has all sorts of logical reasons why I should not feel so sad; on the other, my heart is bereft. My upbringing suggests that I deal with this by ignoring, as best as I am able, the pain of these losses, and over the years I have become adept at that. I can throw myself into work, or various forms of entertainment – food, drink, shopping; I can keep myself too busy or too numb to feel. None of that in the end helps.

There are Biblical examples of grief that suggest that the only way out or through grief is to allow ourselves to feel it. The psalms are filled with lament. Jacob is was inconsolable at the thought that Joseph had been torn to pieces by wild beasts. David grieved the death of his friend Jonathan and was clearly devastated by the death of his son Absalom. The Book of Lamentation describes the devastation the people felt at the siege and fall of Jerusalem by Babylon. Jesus, famously, wept at the death of his friend Lazarus before raising him, and over Jerusalem's intransigence in the face of God's love, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. The disciples on the road to Emmaus express the death of their dreams with the words – "We had hope. . ."

But it is not only people who grieve. The Biblical witness is that God, too, grieves. The New Living Translation describes God as "broken hearted" over the state of God's creation just prior to the flood, and Ephesians warns against grieving the Holy Spirit. Clearly experiencing grief is part of what it means for be a human being created in God's image.

(Continued on next page)

Church of the Ascension Staff

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Some of the members of Church of the Ascension's Cub Scout Pack 28 Collected food November 16 in the church's surrounding neighborhoods. The donations were given to the food pantry.

The link to the church calendar is here: <https://www.mychurchevents.com/calendar/73961520>

(Continued from the previous page)

We often approach Lent as a time to resolve to do better and to be better, but it is much more helpful if we use at least some of the time in self-reflection, stopping to feel and name our feelings of loss, sadness, anger and confusion: all those things that are prompting us to turn again toward God. There is something about that articulation that invites God into the situation and gives us hope going forward.

I also invite you to slow down in funerals. Often people tell me that they are looking for a celebration of the life of a beloved person who has died in a funeral. And while I can understand not wanting a morbid funeral—and certainly we are celebrating resurrection to new life in Christ Jesus—funerals are an appropriate place to grieve. Funeral homilies and eulogies are times in which we acknowledge our loss, sadness, perhaps even anger and confusion. Doing so invites God into a broken space within us so that the work of resurrection can begin in us. It creates a seedbed of hope from which we can move forward.

On February 8, I will attend Jean's funeral, and I will grieve, as I still grieve Delores and others I have known. I will do this knowing that life is serious and sometimes sad business, and in hope of the way God uses those things to draw me to fullness of life through Christ who grieves with me.

Finance news 2019

Chuck Beers

The bottom line is that we finished the year even (expenses equaled income), but you have to include the \$15,000 surplus from 2018-2019 that the Vestry voted to deal with later to make that statement. Pledges were \$4000 under budget but total income was right on budget. Expenses were down (good) \$10,000 making the difference between income and budget \$15,000 for this year. So if you add the \$15,000 from 2018-2019 to the 2019-deficit you get zero. Good news!

Remember that we had a \$25,000 deficit budget for this past year so we closed that gap by 10,000 with lower expenses. We had hoped to totally close the gap with increased income *i.e.* more people/bigger pledges. Pledges received were 73—the same as last year—but the total pledged was \$7500 less than last year. However, we had 9 new pledges from last year. There is more good news: we got an additional \$7000 from Ed Johnston's estate.

If anyone has a question about the Finances please ask me.



News from the Dayschool: Link Your VIC Card at Harris Teeter. Shoppers can easily link their VIC card to the school to earn money for us. Go to the website and register. This one-time per year sign-up links your card to the school for a whole school-year. It runs from August through about the beginning of June. Or every time you shop, simply give the cashier your card and our school code **#4477**.

Family Formation

Patti Glowatsky

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." Revelation 22:17 NIV

Over the last few months, the Women's Bible Study group has done an intense study of the Book of Revelation. As we navigated John's prophetic visions, we grew to understand that in order to live a Christ-centered life we must be thirsty. Thirsty for a life that is overflowing with close relationship to God.

As we continue to grow in that relationship and look at the theme "Who are our neighbors?" I challenge us all to see Jesus in the faces of those around us. From the old man at the grocery store searching for the perfect greeting card, to the woman on the corner crossing the busy street to the bus stop with her children. From the man at the gas station paying in change, to the couple arguing at the table next to you in a restaurant. We are all equally loved and are called to love each other equally as well. There are more obstacles to this challenge than I can count, but the greatest is our own separation from what God is asking of us.



We will be examining this theme during Lent with a study called The Grace of Les Misérables by Matt Rawle. Victor Hugo's beloved characters will lead us to examine the themes of grace, poverty, revolution, love and hope. With Rawle's help we will draw parallels between the iconic story and musical to our own Christian calling to live out a life of faith in the world.

Both the youth and adults will spend the weeks of Lent on this study, and we will conclude our efforts with a screening of the 2012 screen adaptation of Les Misérables starring Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe and Anne Hathaway. This will be an amazing opportunity to come together and share what we have learned about ourselves, our faith and a beautiful piece of classic literature. Because this is a full six-week study, the adults will begin BEFORE Lent on Wednesday, February 19 at 6:00 PM. (Optional potluck from 5:30 to 6:00 PM). Each session is a video and discussion, and we will end promptly at 7:30 PM. Childcare will be provided. We will meet subsequent Wednesdays (except February 26 which is Ash Wednesday), and together view the movie on Sunday evening, April 5. I hope everyone will consider taking on this study as we journey thirstily together towards Easter and towards the salvation we seek in a life lived to the Glory of God who so loved us...

From the Senior Warden

Susan Motley

Each morning as I wait for coffee to be ready, I check the weather and news on my phone and scroll through Facebook. On a recent Sunday morning, I was surprised to see Susan B. Haynes listed as a person I might know. I was asked if I would like to "send Susan a friend request." After a moment's thought, my request was on its way and to my astonishment it was rather quickly accepted!

Later that day after church, I found that Bishop-elect Haynes had posted a photo of a moving van parked on a street bordering a grassy lawn with the caption: "This move is happening!" I wished her a safe journey and commented that we were looking forward to welcoming her to the 757. She almost immediately queried, "What is the 757?" brought her up to speed on the ongoing quest to find an inclusive name for this region and shared the objections to Tidewater, Hampton Roads, and Coastal Virginia. While I finished my explanation, other Facebook friends were welcoming her to the 804. She replied that she understood and was looking forward to getting to know the region and its people.

Since her arrival in Virginia, I have found Sunday photos of her smiling and engaged with parishioners in churches throughout our diocese.

She has asked for prayers as her husband began his journey to Virginia from Indiana, and we rejoiced with her when she found the Dukes mayonnaise that had been packed for the move!

Yes, the Bishop-elect is on Facebook! I like her already, and I just had to share that.