

ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND ANGLICAN CHURCH

161 Hanmer St. W., Barrie, On L4N 7S1 (705) 721-9528
www.stmargaretbarrie.ca Email: stmarg@rogers.com Fax: (705) 721-9455



Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Incumbent	The Rev. Simon Bell	(416) 570-6898
Honorary Associate	Alex Hewitt	(705) 333-6650
Rector's Warden	Grant Robinson	(705) 726-0147
Deputy Rector's Warden	Pauline Cook	(705) 737-0605
Deputy Rector's Warden	Doug Court	(705) 728-6659
People's Warden	Peter Beckett	(705) 733-1741
Deputy People's Warden	Laura Johnston	(705) 322-2186
Office Administrator	Colleen Hamann	(705) 728-8761
Treasurer	Joy Packham	(705) 721-4482
Envelope Sec'ty	Pam Kernen	(705) 733-5286
Sunday School Sup't	Eileen Cunningham	(705) 715-8468
Lay Associate, Missional	Beth Steffler	(705) 728-1543
Lay Associate, Pastoral	Amy Pauley	(613) 404-3349
Prayer Chain	Gail Jones	(705) 726-4221
Chancel Co-ordinator	Diane MacCormack	(705) 734-2957
Flower Chancel	Sharon Zacchigna	(705) 252-0731
Music Directors	Gayle Haley	(705) 728-3859
	Craig Snider	(705) 722-1117
Custodians	Chanda Farrell	(705) 828-7186
	Dave Flavelle	
Sidesperson Co-ord.	Kevin LeMoine	(705) 252-6528
Audio/Visual	David Paradis	

Wednesday Service

January 27, 2021

11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Celebrant: Lord, open our lips,

People: And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Celebrant: O God, make speed to save us.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Alleluia!

Celebrant: The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: O come, let us worship.

Jubilate

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song. Know this: The Lord himself is God; he himself has made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and call upon his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

The Psalms

Psalm 53

Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts; there is no one who does good.

God looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.

They have all fallen away, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one.

Have they no knowledge, those evildoers, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God? There they shall be in great terror, in terror such as has not been. For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly; they will be put to shame, for God has rejected them.

O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

People: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be for ever. Amen.

The Proclamation of the Word

A READING FROM GALATIANS 2:11-21

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MARK (6:13-29)

People: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the baptizer.' Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

The Gospel of Christ.

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON

Standing up for our convictions

There is something deeply eroding of confidence and trust when people – particularly leaders - are swayed in their choices by their need to seek approval. Both the New Testament and the Gospel reading set for today give us that sense.

In the Gospel reading for today we have that awful account of the beheading of John the Baptist all for the sake of a spineless Herod as he gives in to the wishes of his vengeful wife Herodias as she plays on his daughter's affections. The Bible is great in recording family disfunction and this is one of those prime examples that has tragic consequences for John the Baptist who is simply a pawn in their own internal family conflict. And, while Herod has this great fear and fascination for John and greaves the order he has to pronounce, he gives in to his wife's request through his daughter simply so as not to displease.

In the reading set for us from Galatians today we get a sense of Paul's frustration with Peter for doing a similar thing – going against his very conscience for the sake of not displeasing some. In essence, he is willing to throw the new Gentile converts under the bus of legalism for the sake of not offending a particular faction within the life of the church.

Church is like family and sometimes folk play like unhappy little children and leaders play they are parents trying to meet conflicting expectations in ways that will not offend. The early church behaved in this way over the requirements set on Gentiles who became followers of Jesus. There was one faction in the early church who were insistent that Gentiles followers were required to follow the Hebrew Law. They came to be known as the Judiasers. There were others who argued that the Law should never be a requirement for those wanting to live out their faith.

And, as in all things, there were leaders in each group. While Paul was strongly opposed to the application of the Law to Gentile converts, James was of the opinion that the Hebrew Law was intrinsic to Christian practice. But, as Paul points out to the church in Galatia where the faction know as the Judiasers had become a significant issue, Peter was the one who had the most profound experience of making the shift towards disregarding the Law for the sake of the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles. Yet, in contrast, he is the most willing to give up on his own convictions for the sake of not offending a faction in the life of the church.

The question for Paul is not whether people should keep the Law or not, but rather what was at the heart of the idea of being a faithful follower of Jesus. So, in writing to the church in Galatia, he pens that wonderful statement, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In our baptism – the sacrament and sign of us dying and being resurrected in Christ - we live out that very reality each and every day. That it is solely through that work of grace that I live out the convictions of my faith. It is that conviction that anchors my faith and is the central hub around which all of the rest of my faith rotates. The rest – the living out of the Law for those early Christians, us celebrating our faith through our Christian calendar, the elements of our life of discipleship, our weekly practice of faith and the things we choose to give up or take on during certain times of year – all need to be seen through that lens. None of them makes us more of a follower of Jesus or puts us in a better position in relation to God – justifies us to use Paul's language – or adds to our standing before God. Pure and simple.

You see the early church suffered the same fate as us. They too tried to make good Baptists out and Anglicans

or good Anglicans out of Roman Catholics or good Jews out of Gentiles by insisting that their version of faith was somehow more credible or godly or Biblical or faithful. These squabbles tell us far more about people's insecurities than they do about our convictions. But as Paul points out – if our common life is to be found in the grace offered to each of us in Christ where we find ourselves - then the issue is one of us faithfully living out our convictions and letting others live out theirs. That we to need to work out our own faith in our own context and in our own time and not be swayed or pressured into conforming for the sake of fear or not wanting to offend.

This past week is the week of Christian unity. Pray that we might find a common recognition of our faith in Christ's grace for all of us and allow each other to live out our faith in manner appropriate to our calling and vocation. **Amen**

Affirmation of Faith

Hear, O Israel

People: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Intercessions and Thanksgivings

Litany 18 A Responsive Intercession

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

Silence

Celebrant: For all people in their daily life and work;

People: **For our families, friends, and neighbours, and for all those who are alone.**

Celebrant: For this community, our country, and the world;

People: **For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.**

Celebrant: For the just and proper use of your creation;

People: **For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.**

Celebrant: For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

People: **For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.**

Celebrant: For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

People: **For all who proclaim the gospel, and all who seek the truth.**

Celebrant: *For Andrew* our bishop, and for all bishops and other ministers;

People: **For all who serve God in his Church.**

Celebrant: For our own needs and those of others. Hear us, Lord;

People: **For your mercy is great.**

Celebrant: We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life. We will exalt you, O God our king;

People: And praise your name for ever and ever.

Celebrant: We pray for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for those whose faith is known to you alone, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom. Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them;

People: Who put their trust in you.

Celebrant: We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins. Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;

People: in your compassion, forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone; and so uphold us by your Spirit that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebrant: Gracious God, you have heard the prayers of your faithful people; you know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Grant our requests as may be best for us. This we ask in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

The Collect

Celebrant: Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

All: Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

Officiant: Gathering our prayers and praises into one, **let us pray as our Saviour taught us,**

All: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Dismissal:

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Notices

Blessing:

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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Assisting Rev. Simon today:

Celebrant/Preacher: The Rev. Simon Bell

This morning in our worship we remember in our prayers those of our family and friends who have immediate needs and concerns:

Amy Pauley's Dad & Family; Jaxon Croft; Michelle & Ian Sinclair; Sean; Brian W.; Jenn Reid; Kevin H.; Diane M.; Bill Snow; Deborah Hall; Owen; Sophia L; Marianne S.; Amanda Stewart; Kathryn; Kadeem Broomes; Anna Sellers; Marty; Brenda Jessem; Brenda & Brian.

The names below are people in need of ongoing prayers for various reasons so we ask you to please continue to pray for them and their continuing need of God's healing touch and grace:

Jen Galicinski; Cecilia Mowat; Arlene; Joan Gough; Lorraine W; Stephanie; Fr. Murray; Marg Abbott; Livia & Neil Purcell; Jordan; Margie Mills; Eunice Merrett; Jean Wallace; Nancy Dodds; Lee & Jeannie Martin; Bill & Cathy Gray; Wendy Goodyer; Donna Wilson; Garn Mennell; Margaret & Gordon Kennedy; Paul & Rose McIntyre; Jim Tomkins; Do Saunders; Jefferson Jr.; June Osolin; Martin & Stephen Bertelsen; Tanya Wade-Vargas.

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

The Dioceses of Long Island (USA), Swansea & Brecon (Wales), and Guadalcanal (Melanesia)

In the Toronto Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

St. John York Mills