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February 2023

Dear members and friends of Christ Church,

Although Ash Wednesday is not until the end of this month, it seems appropriate that I start our Lenten season of penitence early. I confess that, through my misperceptions and miscommunications, I failed to serve all the members of Christ Church and, in consequence, our body has been diminished. In my effort to identify and empower lay ministers, I erred by beginning a ministry without short-term parameters agreed to by both Vestry and volunteers and without planned review by a broad sample of parishioners. In my enthusiasm for serving the least of these in Martinsville, I did not perceive that, for the majority of you, support for a drop-in homeless ministry was at best tepid even when safety and security issues were addressed. In the face of your concerns over this ministry, I was ineffectually reactive and personally defensive. I am truly sorry, and I humbly repent. As repentance, I am refocusing my energy on preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, while letting the Vestry take the lead in identifying the needs of our neighbors and the ways our church might love them. As we all move into Lent, in the spirit of St. Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth, I appeal to you that we be united across all our differences in the love of Christ, into whose body we have all been baptized.

- Fr. John

Scam Alert

Last week, many of you got a text purporting to be from Fr. John and asking for an unspecified favor. This is an unfortunately common scam targeting churches: unscrupulous actors obtain a church's contact list or directory and, using a fake phone number or email, contact church members identifying themselves as the church's clergyperson. Those who respond are typically asked for money in the form of a gift card. Although we have taken steps to make sure our contacts are not easily available, this is evidence that at least one of our lists is already out there, and another scam using that list at some point in the future is likely. **Fr. John will never ask you to send money (as a gift card or otherwise) to him directly.** If a text or email purports to be from Fr. John but you are in doubt, contact him or the office by different means (for example, send him an email if you're suspicious about a text).

Kings Grant Eucharist

Covid permitting, Fr. John will celebrate Eucharist in the chapel at Kings Grant on the first Thursday of each month at 1:30 pm. The next services will be on February 2 and March 2.

Public Theology – February 8

Public Theology meets on Wednesday, February 8, at Mountain Valley Brewing (4220 Mountain Valley Rd, Axton). We begin with socializing and food around 6:00, with the discussion going from 7:00 to 8:00. As we are in Valen-times, Pastor Daniel and Father John will lead us in a discussion about what love is, considering love as a theological category and how our popular understandings of emotional love and love in action might or might not fit.

Loaves & Fishes

Loaves & Fishes (which often involves bread, but rarely fish) is our free community meal, served in the Undercroft from 5:00 to 5:45 pm on the last Wednesday of each month. Andy and Tara Williams have assumed responsibility for planning and organizing the meals; volunteers are always needed to help with preparing, serving, and cleaning up. We also try to have fruit and other desserts available, and donations of either may be brought to the Office or Undercroft in the days leading up to each meal. We have resumed our prior custom of serving dine-in only, with leftovers distributed as takeout only at the end of the meal. In February (due to the fast day of Ash Wednesday falling on the last Wednesday), our monthly free meal will be a **Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 21 from 5:00 to 5:45 pm.**



Ash Wednesday

February 22 is Ash Wednesday. Holy Communion with the Imposition of Ashes will be offered in the church at Noon and 7pm.

Lent Program

Our annual adult education program during Lent will take place in the Undercroft on Monday evenings (February 27 and March 6, 13, 20, and 27). This year, Fr. John is offering Back to Basics, a five-week survey of the history, theology, worship, and governance of the Episcopal Church, situating us within the larger Christian tradition; in addition to being of general interest as a refresher about who we are as Episcopalians, this introduction is recommended for any adults who are considering becoming members of Christ Church through Confirmation or Reception. We will begin with a light meal of soup and bread at 6:30 pm, with the study going from 7:00 to 8:00.

Pictures Wanted

As part of our effort to keep our website up to date, we are seeking pictures of recent church events. You are invited to share your pictures, if you are willing to do so, with Deborah (christchurchmv1@gmail.com).

Diocesan Convention

Diocesan Convention was held in Roanoke January 27-29. In addition to Fr. John and Ellen Maxwell representing Christ Church as our clergy and lay delegates, Baylie Coleman, Claire Warner Coleman, Catherine Maxwell, and Elizabeth Maxwell attended the concurrent gathering of Youth @ Convention. The Convention passed the budget (which notably funds a number of curacies for recently ordained priests in the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia), approved the first reading of a constitutional amendment to allow the appointment of a Vice Chancellor to assist the Chancellor (Diocesan lawyer), and heard from Bishop Mark, his wife Martha, and several boys from Boys Home of Virginia, among others. Much good food was eaten, good conversations were had, and the youth and delegates came together for a festive service of Holy Communion with Baptisms and Confirmation on Sunday morning. Bishop Mark's sermon is available on the [DioSWVA YouTube Channel](#).