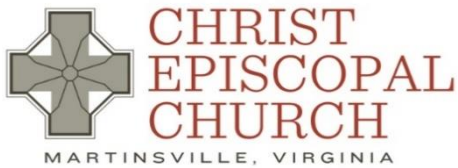


May 2023



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Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9a)

Dear members and friends of Christ Church,

Churches (like any other small, voluntary community) often struggle with gossip, as stories that are slanted in a particular direction, incomplete, or entirely untrue circulate among some members of the community, while others are unaware of what is being said or find themselves unwilling or unable to say otherwise. Among the forms such gossip can take are triangulation (when individuals in conflict talk about their problems with third parties but not directly to each other), parking lot conversations (when individuals or groups raise concerns in private but not to the people who might address them or in a forum where they could be addressed), and sharing unverified or implausible rumors.

Several letters in the New Testament condemn gossip, not just because of the harm it can do to the community, but because the persistence of gossip indicates a wider failure of the church to live in Christian love. When lots of gossip is circulating, it suggests that neither those who gossip nor those who are gossiped about can trust that their fellow church members prioritize the love of God and their neighbor above their personal agendas. That erosion of trust, more than the specific content of any rumor, can lead not just to individuals leaving the church but to the dissolution of the functional community.

Like many churches, Christ Church has at least occasional problems with gossip: folks who share their concerns about parish leadership with other parishioners (or with people outside the parish) but not with said leaders, stories of parish happenings that assume the motives of others are malicious rather than benign, and sometimes entirely false rumors (like the one that I had fired our Senior Warden, which was circulating the morning after the Vestry re-elected him).

I write this not to condemn those who have partaken in such gossip but to call all of us, myself included, healthier, Scriptural ways of communicating through conflict. As a practical matter, Matthew 18 encourages a church member who was wronged by another to talk directly with that person (in the presence of other church members as needed), which can be a useful suggestion not only to those who feel wronged but to any who hear another telling a story of being wronged. Attitudinally, the First Letter of Peter (quoted above) suggests that church members should approach each other with sympathy, considering each other's motivations with tenderness and humility (rather than assuming malice), and even if those motives are found to be evil, to repay them with blessing anyway, because to be the Church is to love God and one another in spite of our conflicts.

- Fr. John

Fr. John Out-of-town

Fr. John is out-of-town May 1-13 for vacation and a continuing education conference. The 10:30 service on May 7 will be Morning Prayer, and there will be no Wednesday Chapel or Thursday Kings Grant Eucharists those weeks. Wednesday Noon Eucharist will resume its usual schedule on May 17, and the next Kings Grant Thursday Eucharist will be June 1 at 1:30 pm.

Safe Church, Safe Communities

The Diocese of Southwestern Virginia has transitioned to a new, online-only Safe Church, Safe Communities training that can be completed on one's own schedule. For the safety of everyone involved, current Safe Church training is required for all church volunteers and staff who work as nursery attendants, Sunday School teachers, Youth Group leaders, or any other program with children or youth. If you are volunteering or would like to volunteer with children and youth at Christ Church and have not completed Safe Church Safe Communities training within the past three years, please contact Deborah to get started. The next training is May 3 3:00pm-4:00pm OR 7:00pm-8:00pm via zoom.

Public Theology

Public Theology meets on Wednesday, May 10, 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.

Awards Sunday

Awards Sunday is May 21; during the 10:30 service, we will present the Beverly S. Parrish, Jr. award and offer a prayer for our high school graduates.

Pentecost

May 28 is the Feast of Pentecost, a Principal Feast of the Church (along with Christmas and Easter); you are invited to wear red in celebration of the Holy Spirit.

Loaves & Fishes – The Last Wednesday of Every Month!

Next Date – May 31, 2023

April Entree - Baked Ziti

All members of the community are invited to this free meal in our Undercroft from **5:00-6:00 p.m.** Spread the Word!

Andy and Tara Williams planned the meals, and the food was delicious! **We need volunteers to help prepare, serve, and clean up on meal day. Volunteers are also needed to send desserts and fruit.** 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.

Grace Network

Our Grace Network Assignments for **May through June: Juice (40-64 oz.)** For the month of **May: bath soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, and toothbrush (individually wrapped)**. As a Church family, we have committed to helping Grace Network with stocking their food pantry for those in need. Please remember to pick up our assigned item the next time you visit the grocery store. You can bring your items to the Church office OR put them in the little red wagon in the Narthex.

Rent the Parish House!

Christ Church's beautiful and historic Parish House is available to rent for your engagement parties, baby showers, portrait sessions, and other special meetings and gatherings. Parish members receive a **20%** discount off the rental rate. Contact Deborah (office@christchurchmvl.org or 276-632-2896) to book your event.