

St. Stephen's Herald

✦ *St. Stephen's Episcopal Church serves Christ as an inclusive, progressive community where peace, social justice and faith converge in our worship and urban ministries.* ✦

February 2017

Sunday Worship 10 AM – Communion with Music

After Coffee Hour

Book Circle for Lent

Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life

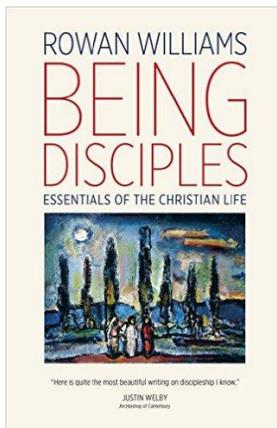
by Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury)

Paperback, 96 pages

\$5.88 on Amazon (and

remember, Amazon Smile

orders help St. Stephen's!)



Basic instruction in Christian discipleship from one of the world's greatest living theologians "Discipleship," says Rowan Williams in this companion to his best-selling *Being Christian*, "is a state of being. Discipleship is about how we live; not just the decisions we make, not just the things we believe, but a state of being."

Having covered baptism, Bible, Eucharist, and prayer in *Being Christian*, Williams turns his attention in this book to what is required for us to continue following Jesus and growing in faith. The book has six succinct chapters:

1. Being Disciples
2. Faith, Hope, and Love
3. Forgiveness
4. Holiness
5. Faith in Society
6. Life in the Spirit

In his typically gentle, inviting, pastoral writing style, Williams offers biblically grounded wisdom for Christians at all stages of their journeys as disciples of Jesus.

House Church

Please consider hosting House Church on a Monday in Lent. House Church is a simple meal, fellowship and Compline. Hosts provide two types of soup and beverages – cider, coffee, tea, etc. The soups can be as simple or as adventurous as the host would like, and one should be vegetarian. Guests contribute salads, breads and desserts for the rest of the meal. We gather around 6 pm, say grace and start eating by 6:30, hold a simple Compline service, and are finished by 8 pm.



3/6 Sew Green, 438 W. Main Street

3/13 MaryJo Brach Farnum and Chris Farnum, 62 Crawford Street

3/20 South Wedge Mission, 215 Caroline St.

3/27 The Mitchell Family, 65 Bradburn Street

4/3 Dave & Kolleen Morse, 45 Oakmount Dr.

Any questions, please contact Bonnie Hallman-Dye, bhallmandye@gmail.com or 975-9227, evenings.

March 5th is 1st Sunday!

The pastor's discretionary fund is used to help those from the neighborhood who come to the church in need, most often a type of assistance not available from the usual agencies or programs. On the first Sunday each month, any loose cash in the offering plate goes into that fund. Please be generous if you are able.



From The Pastor ---

The past few years, I've tried to move away from seeing Lent as a drab, penitential season of giving up delights and focusing on mortality. I've chosen to see not Ash Wednesday, but the Feast of the Transfiguration, as the beginning of my Lenten observance, with its focus not on what we must shed, but on the goal of being clothed fully in the beauty of Christ's uncreated light.

The Eastern Orthodox call this “theosis,” or, divinization, and in the West we remember it through the words of church father St. Athanasius, who reminds us that “Christ became as we are, that we might become as Christ is.” It’s a blessed exchange, more akin to a second Christmas, where the work of the Incarnation takes root and spreads throughout our lives and world. It’s about what we are working for, not just what we are contending against.

But this year, I was really struck by the reading from the prophet Joel for Ash Wednesday. Speaking in a time of political and spiritual turmoil for the people of Israel, he issues a strange invitation:

2.2 Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; 16 gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. 17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, "Where is their God?" "

We may be accustomed to hearing such texts on Ash Wednesday or during Lent. But in Joel’s time, there was no Lent. He was addressing not merely a small, faithful congregation deciding on whether to abstain from chocolate or coffee. This was a national policy advisory. An urgent call to action. A matter of life and death.

Our political leaders do not speak in such terms. On the spectrum of “fight or flight,” our country generally turns towards the first option. We preach the need to act, and act decisively, to fix problems, to offer solutions, to make change happen, and to see that it does so on our time table. Sadly, in a time of difficult and often heart-breaking transition,

our church leaders’ strategy seems no less anxious, no more successful.

But Joel does not advise flight either. He calls everyone - even the bride and groom about to enjoy their first night together! - to assemble. To pray. To fast. To return. “Why should it be said among the peoples,” he asks, ““where is their God?””

Regardless of your political or theological inclinations, and no matter how busy you are, and no matter how jaded you might feel by broken political promises or delayed spiritual fulfillment, I believe Joel’s advice calls to you, and it calls to me. In our time of turmoil, this season of Lent is a gift, not merely to dream of glory and work for growth, but also, to sit in the ashes, to remember our deep dependence and unceasing need for the grace of God, and to let that volcanic soil compost into the nutrient rich soil that so often follows catastrophe.

Prayer and fasting are not given to us as gifts for self-flagellation. They are a crucial part of our becoming more like God. I can have my cake and eat it too with Lent, it seems (though perhaps refraining from cake is also advisable for me!). In order to share in Christ’s glory, we must also share in Christ’s cross. We must stop depending on our own power and promises, become silent before the mystery of our overwhelming ability to save ourselves, and let the humility that comes with the knowledge of death teach us that some things are worth the cost of our life.

The glory of God being shared with us in Lent is free and for all. But we must, together, use our time to discern. To ask questions without knowing the answers - and to be open to receiving new and better questions. These may not solve our immediate crisis. But having waited and returned to the Lord, we can resume our journey with the confidence that though we are dust, and to dust we shall return, one day, our dust will be reborn in the phoenix fire of eternal beauty.

Action will come later. The fire will be lit. But first, we must sit in the ashes. Not in despair. But in dependence and trust that it is here, united to Christ in death, that we shall find ourselves raised with Christ in his new life.

Matthew

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On your first visit, choose us as your charity: just type in "St Stephen's Episcopal Church, Rochester NY"! 5% of eligible purchases* goes to St. Stephens! But for it to work, you must get to Amazon from the Smile.Amazon.com page, so change that bookmark! Log in just like always – your personal shopping cart, wish lists, and registries are all there – plus your Amazon Prime!

Box Tops for Education: Sponsoring School 16

Many Thanks to all who have faithfully clipped box tops and can / jar labels! In the past, School #16 has used the money for school supplies (such as crayons for all of the primary grades) and for the end of the year picnic. Keep those labels coming! It's doesn't seem like much, but that do add up and help the school provide materials and events beyond their very restricted budget. Put labels & box tops in a zipper baggie or envelope, & deposit in the box in the back of church. Questions? Call or e-mail Linda Dronsfield at 383-0296 or kelseed@aol.com



and for Shelia Morse, Anne Hallman, Jim Ahearn and family Jason Mills, Joan Gardner, Lynne & Brian McNulty, Kathy Robinson, Doris Schrader, Dennis Price, Maelee Bowman, The Sullivan family, Tom Bohrer, Kathy Clarke, Karen Witkowicz, Debbie Bonomo, Rachael Bisson, Karen Prave, Elizabeth Robinson, Michelle Flowers; Amber Worthington, David Burrows, Beverly Kluge, Virginia Rockwell, Joe and Jessie & family, Mary Cleary, Jesse Alston, and Kristen Kinsella.

Those serving in our armed forces: Joseph Scheidt, Jason Brown, & Jeff Fallesen.

Those Celebrating Birthdays:–Karen Licata (3/3), Kristen Kinsella (3/3), Mary-Jo Brach (3/5), David Morse (3/16), Charlie Zettek (3/17), Brian McNulty (3/20), Katie Zettek (3/21), and Kolleen Morse (3/25) Vaughn Brooks (3/27), Courtney Dronsfield (3/31) Karen Kirkey (3/31)

and **Anniversaries:** Cyril & Kathleen Robinson (3/2), and Lynne & Brian McNulty (3/11).

Who's Up... in March

The Ministry Schedule is on the website, or refer to the copy that was in the mail.

UPCOMING EVENTS – SAVE THE DATES!

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
| House Church | March 6 | 6 pm |
| House Church | March 13 | 6 pm |
| Vestry | March. 21 | 6:30 pm |

REGULARLY SCHEDULED PARISH ACTIVITIES

| | |
|--|------------|
| Holy Eucharist: Sundays @ SS | 10:00 AM |
| Mindful Meditation: Tuesdays @ SS | 7:00 PM |
| Weekday Eucharist: Tues. & Thurs. @ TS | 12:05 PM |
| The Sewing Work Shop: Saturdays @ SS | 10 AM-2 PM |
| St. Stephen's Sunday Supper @ SS | 1:00-2 PM |
| 3 rd , 4 th , & 5 th Sunday | |

Prayers for Our Parish Neighborhood and Community

Please keep these people in your daily prayers:

Our Sunday Supper Family: Sunday Supper Family: Annie, John, Patty, Betty, Lenora, Mary, Alicia, Mark, and Donna,

Readings for Sunday, March 5

The 1st Sunday in Lent

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1 st Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 | Psalm 32 |
| 2 nd Romans 5:12-19, | G: Matthew 4:1-11 |

Readings for Sunday, March 12

The 2nd Sunday in Lent

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|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 st Genesis 12:1-4a | Psalm 121 |
| 2 nd Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 | G: John 3:1-17 |

Readings for Sunday, March 19

The 3rd Sunday in Lent

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|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 st Exodus 17:1-7 | Psalm 95 |
| 2 nd Romans 5:1-11 | G: John 4:5-42 |

Readings for Sunday, March 26

The 4th Sunday in Lent

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 st 1 Samuel 16:1-13 | Psalm 23 |
| 2 nd Ephesians 5:8-14 | G: John 9:1-41 |