

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;

The events of the past weeks have left me broken hearted and furious. And when I feel like this it is best to pray, although prayers will not be enough my sisters and brothers. We must follow through with action. Action guided through the Good News of the Gospel. But for now, prayer -

Let us pray for all who have died in the hope of the resurrection, for the victims of the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas: Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, age 10; Alithia Ramirez, age 10; Amerie Jo Garza, age 10; Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez, age 10; Eliahana Cruz Torres, age 10; Eliana “Ellie” Garcia, age 9; Eva Mireles, age 44; Irma Garcia; Jackie Cazares, age 10; Jailah Nicole Silguero, age 10; Jayce Luevanos, age 10; Jose Flores, age 10; Layla Salazar, age 10; Makenna Lee Elrod, age 10; Maite Rodriguez; Miranda Mathis, age 11; Nevaeh Bravo; Rojelio Torres, age 10; Tess Marie Mata; Uziyah Garcia, age 8; Xavier Lopez, age 10.

For the victims of the racial shooting in Buffalo, New York: Roberta A. Drury of Cicero, N.Y. - age 32; Margus D. Morrison of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 52; Andre Mackneil of Auburn, N.Y. – age 53; Aaron Salter of Lockport, N.Y. – age 55; Geraldine Talley of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 62; Celestine Chaney of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 65; Heyward Patterson of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 67; Katherine Massey of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 72; Pearl Young of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 77; Ruth Whitfield of Buffalo, N.Y. – age 86 and for all the departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

That we may end our lives in faith and hope, without suffering and without reproach, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

In the communion of Blessed Virgin Mary, Ss. Peter and John, and of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life, to Christ our God.

To thee, O Lord our God.

There is enough sadness in the world, and it can feel overwhelming. But we are Christians, we are people of hope. This Easter season teaches us that Resurrection means that death and darkness never have the last word.

And a great reason for hope and joy is a Baptism on Pentecost, June 5! We will be baptizing Christopher Anthony Muirhead Jr. And welcoming him into the family of Christ and Ss. Peter and John Church.

For this I say “Thanks be to God!”

Grace and Peace,

John +

Father John †

ON-LINE WORSHIP

Sundays - 10am Worship Service

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97774056978?pwd=ZytJSVZjWmt3MUdSMk13U1JaaGNLZz09>

Meeting ID: 982 7706 2680

Passcode: 435902

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Other Zoom Worship Schedule and Numbers

Tuesdays – 10am Bible Study

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94333886777?pwd=WnNKSncyQkkzS1g0Yjc3ZGIVbk1PQT09>

Meeting ID: 943 3388 6777

Passcode: 577455

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Wednesdays – 12pm Worship Service

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95528786615?pwd=Z01DVGdvcG5XeVBIUVRMKzFFVVBjZz09>

Meeting ID: 955 2878 6615

Passcode: 634665

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Thursdays – 10am Coffee and Conversation

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97366952412?pwd=WUtQVFMjWjFkZWmRBT1UyTHQ2Rm5Rdz09>

Meeting ID: 973 6695 2412

Passcode: 120228

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Monday – Tuesday – Wednesday – Thursday – Friday

MORNING PRAYER – RITE II

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/john.rohde.16/>

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92662278952>

Meeting ID: 926 6227 8952

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 926 6227 8952

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/j/92662278952>

Vestry Voice

The May Vestry meeting began with an opening devotional. The April minutes were approved.

Father John and Denise Whalen will meet with Diane Bauso from the Montessori School to come up with a monthly amount that is fair to both the school and the church. Father John will reach out to Terry Beyor about attending the next meeting to answer any questions about the financials. The April financials were approved.

We have received the check from the insurance company for the hot water heater and the excavation necessary to find the water main break totaling \$2,620.32.

We have been having some issues with people in the back of the church. One incident was a tent erected in the back with people staying in it. The police were called, the tent and the people were removed. Another incident there was a homeless man living under the chapel in the crawl space that was opened up for the Verizon man to run the cables for the internet in the church. Again, the police were called, his things were removed and the opening has been boarded up tight. It was suggested that maybe we should put up cameras or motion sensors or both. It was also suggested that the side door to the church be locked during choir rehearsal.

We are still having trouble with Father John's wireless microphone. We are working to resolve the problem because a new one would be about \$1,000. Joy O'Donnell has submitted another Grant proposal to the diocese to cover the expenses that were not covered under the previous Grant.

Father John reached out to David Contiguglia, lawyer for Eric Osborne, about the account May Osborne Memorial Youth Fund. David said he would need to do some research as to the original purpose for this money and can it be used to offset the deficit in the Youth Fund that is used for Work Camp?

It was suggested that we have a plaque made for Bill Suhr that would be mounted in the community room above the chair that he always sat in while waiting for the 10 am service to begin. It was also suggested that maybe we could have the Sanctus Bells engraved with his name.

Father John would like to do a Mass on the Grass service at least once a month.

The Parish Picnic will be in August. A date is to be decided.

It was suggested that we could have a Pot Luck supper.

The meeting closed with Compline. Next Vestry meeting June 8, 2022.

Fundraising

We are looking for new ideas for fundraisers. If you have an idea, please speak to a vestry member or Father John. We are continuing to accept sneakers for our latest fundraiser. We also have cookbooks for sale, either at the parish office or during coffee hour on Sundays.



Save the Date
August 21, 2022
Emerson Park Pavilion

Work Camp

Every year when the youth groups go to work camp, they are asked to make donations towards local food pantries and other agencies. This year in Scranton they are being asked to donate nonperishable food items and household kitchen items including: eating and cooking utensils, pots, pans, bowls, plates and can openers. There will be a donation box in the back of the church for these items during the month of June. Work camp is the first week in July.

‘We’ve Got to Stop This Senseless Killing’

On the seventh anniversary of the martyrdom of the Mother Emanuel Nine, we still need to heed the text they were studying that evening.

JUNE 2022

BY JAMES A. FORBES JR.

I WAS INVITED to preach for the sixth commemoration of the martyrdom of the Mother Emanuel Nine on June 17, 2021. The service was held at St. Joseph AME Church in Durham, N.C., jointly sponsored by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church of the same city.

After accepting the invitation, I began to do some research regarding the events of that tragic evening of June 17, 2015. After the group had gathered in the basement fellowship hall of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., a young white man came in, and the class welcomed him and offered him a seat at one of the tables. Someone provided a Bible so that he could follow the study session. The Bible study leader for the evening was Myra Thompson. They were studying Mark 4, the parable of the sower.

[Jesus] began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”—Mark 4:2-9

The visitor that night listened attentively during the hour-long lesson. At the end of the session, everyone stood for closing prayer. The visitor took out his gun and began shooting. He told one of the participants that he was not going to shoot her so that she would be left to report what had happened. After the shooting rampage, he turned the gun on himself but discovered that all his ammunition had been expended. He then ran out of the basement fellowship hall, got into his car, and sped away.

I studied the parable and prepared a sermon, which I titled, “What Kind of Soil Are You Determined to Be?” I was warmly complimented for my presentation and hoped that I had gotten to the heart of its message. It was such a powerful word that I wondered why it had not deterred the visitor from the murderous action he had taken that night in 2015.

He had hoped that his heinous action would foment another civil war. This would be his response to the white supremacist claim that Black people were taking over the country. In his mind, this would be just revenge for his claim that Black men were constantly raping white women. How could he not be convinced of the evil of his intent and change his mind as he experienced the kind of hospitality of the members of the Bible class and the gracious spirit of the pastor of the church and the parable of our Lord?

Then I recalled a verse from Isaiah 55:11: “... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” Clearly the visitor did not have ears to hear what the Spirit was trying to say to him.

The parable had not succeeded in all it had purposed, but might there be broader intentions? Or extensions? Could the parable still be at work?

What I would ask the shooter

CONSIDERING SUCH QUESTIONS, I developed an intense longing to visit the shooter in federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind. I would like to raise certain questions with him: How do you feel about the fact that divine providence allowed you to run out of ammunition before you turned your gun on yourself? How does the rape of Black slaves over the centuries compare with the occasional assault of white women by men of color? Would it change your mind if it were discovered that more Black women were victims of sexual assault by whites than the other way around? Should whites be exonerated for their brutalities against people of color during slavery and beyond?

What if it became clear that all people are the same in the sight of God and that attitudes about racial differences are deceptive and illusory? I would like to share my poem “A Conversation with Our Nation about Race” with him and to have him share his thoughts about it. At the end of such an exchange, I would like to know if the parable he heard that night at Mother Emanuel had brought him to the point of regret or remorse. Had he even heard anything like that in his Lutheran church? Maybe the parable was still at work in his heart and mind.

I would like also to know how he felt about the willingness of members of the victims’ families to forgive him although he had not expressed a desire for their forgiveness. Did he discuss his racist views with others in the prison or his family? Or were his attitudes shamefully private, only to be shared with the in-group of internet compatriots?

After this length of time of incarceration, has his thinking changed? The shooter acknowledged that after listening to the parable in the Bible study, he felt that if he did not follow through on his plan that night, he would not be able to do it. The parable created a moral spiritual dilemma for him—would he serve the cause of white supremacist hatred, or would he respond to the calling of truth, justice, and compassion?

A moral spiritual dilemma

TODAY, AS WE approach the seventh anniversary of the martyrdom of the Mother Emanuel Nine, all Americans are facing the same moral spiritual dilemma that young man was struggling with that night. Because Jesus’ parable of the sower has not yet completely fulfilled its purpose, let us encourage preachers around the country of all faith traditions to preach sermons prepared from Mark 4:1-9 or similar themes from other sacred scriptures as brought out in “Determined to Be Good Soil.” Can you imagine the impact of a nationwide Bible study, in effect, focused on Jesus’ teachings about gospel seeds falling on good soil?

It may be helpful in preparing for such a study to review two books written by family members of Mother Emanuel victims. The first book is *For Such a Time as This: Hope and Forgiveness after the Charleston Massacre*, by Rev. Sharon Risher, and the second, written by Rev. Anthony B. Thompson, is titled *Called to Forgive*. Each of these books review the details surrounding those horrible events, and we also see God’s grace at work calling people to the wisdom of Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

What a powerful challenge God arranged for the visitor to hear that night! If only his heart and mind were open to hear the voice of God, the world would have become a different place. As we hear the parable for ourselves, will we resolve to say yes to the gospel mandate and heed the prophetic admonitions? “When we all see we are one family / Life will be so much better for all ... The blood in our veins should be crying / With their blood that’s still crying today.”