



The New Epistle

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The Progressive Episcopal Church

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The Lord is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!



Bishop's CORNER

The following article does not reflect the official theology or doctrine of The Progressive Episcopal Church. The Bishop's Corner is the personal reflections of Rt. Rev. Mansell C. Gilmore, the Presiding Bishop of The Progressive Episcopal Church.

An Honest Faith Part One: Healthy Spirituality

The quest for an authentic spirituality often begins in pain. Whether it is the result of dissatisfaction with the monotony of material life, the loss of a loved one, the suffering of the weak or the injustice of life, suffering at the hands of an uncaring or abusive religious institution, a crisis of faith, or even the result of a visionary experience or divine revelation, the quest for a spirituality that allows us to grow, allows us to transcend the empty platitudes and rituals of normal religious life, a spirituality that can serve as a foundation and support for continued growth and evolution is most often born out of a personal crisis.

Something has shaken us up. Something has triggered a reassessment of our worldview, or at least, how we carry ourselves in the world. Something has reached within us and torn aside the veil of ignorance that most of us wrap our everyday lives in, revealing to us the truth of our insecurity and our uncertainty. Something has cracked our constructs enough to allow us a small glimpse beyond our programming into a universe more vast than we could have imagined. And if we are not adequately prepared for it, such a revelation proves traumatic. We find ourselves challenging our life goals and values, challenging the ideological foundations that we have constructed our lives upon. Where we used to find our joy, our comfort, our satisfaction feels empty and worthless to us now.

Most of us will try to deny these changes. We will try to re-convince ourselves of the adequacy of our lives and values. We will try to numb the pain and quiet our doubts because to question the foundations of our life is to invite more than just a personal crisis for many of us, it opens the doors to familial or social rejection. Some of us will be able to quiet the whisper of revelation, to close the doors of expansion, to kill the seed of new growth and evolution. Some of us will choose the security of former ignorance over new knowledge and truth, but we are not the same. We have seen beyond the curtain. We have an idea of how vast our experience could be. We are not the same, even if we pretend to be.

Some of us will listen to the whispers in the dark. We will stir the flames of inquiry in the hopes of illuminating what has been hidden. We will look for the paths out of the place we have always been. We will challenge our culture. We will challenge our faith. We will challenge the very foundations on which we have built our lives because we want more. We have had a brief glimpse of the abundance of life, and we want that life, that life more abundantly.

When we embrace our new path, many of us will immediately seek something other than what we have known, either a different version of our own tradition (most often with the part that reminds us of our pain whittled away), or sometimes, into a whole new tradition. Most often, however, this leads us into an eclectic path, where we can pick and choose from a variety of traditions and build our own in the hopes of avoiding what caused us pain, or what was unsatisfying to us, or what we see as superfluous in our former tradition.

This eclectic approach can be a healthy first step, especially if we need a new perspective on spirituality or even just a rest from the tensions inherent in the experiences of our own past. If our goal is real spiritual growth, however, we must not allow ourselves to get stuck on an eclectic path. There are two very good reasons for this. “Eclecticism compromises the very traditions it draws upon.”¹ Even within a single religious tradition there are many traditions of spiritual discipline. It is possible to be a student of more than one discipline, or even more than one religious tradition, but in doing so, we must refrain from imposing one on the other and live within the tensions between the traditions or the disciplines. Yes, there will be tensions. Even between spiritual traditions within the same religious tradition. These traditions are not just a collection of techniques that can be pulled apart from the parent tradition and patched together to decrease the tension in our lives. These traditions, and the techniques within them, are parts of an integral whole built on the foundations of a specific model of reality or experience and designed to bring the student of the tradition into ever-greater depths of experience and insight. To pick out a few techniques without investing ourselves in the depths of the tradition is to dishonor the tradition and us.

The second reason it is important not to get stuck on an eclectic path is that in spite of apparent surface similarities the depths of each spiritual tradition (again, even within a single religious tradition) is particular to the subtleties of perspective cultivated by long term, in depth work within a specific model of reality or experience (what I call a “working model”). When viewed at depth, the major differences between working models and processes overpower the apparent similarities. If our goal is real spiritual growth, we are best off working within a spiritual discipline in order to swim the depths of the soul fully supported by the security of the discipline.

But what path do we follow? When we recognize that we have outgrown the need for the eclectic path, where do we go from there? There is a principle called “the language of the soul,” that should be our first consideration. As we grow spiritually, we will dive into the depths of our own souls. As we do so, we will encounter images that clothe forces within ourselves. These forces are manifestations of our most basic instincts linked to the powerful images of the content of the deepest reaches of our souls. The images or symbols that clothe these forces are drawn from our earliest and most pervasive symbolic languages. Whether we were raised going to church every day, or studied mathematics from infancy, the symbols of our earliest programming will be the language of the deepest level of our souls. For this reason, it is easier (and often most conducive to growth) to embrace a spiritual tradition that uses the same language to which we are already accustomed. This will often require us to redefine the contents of the symbols that comprise the language of our programming, but this can have a deeply therapeutic result. This is especially true when we carry pain and trauma associated with the symbols of our tradition. If we are to heal, we will have to come to terms with (which means accepting and assimilating) the symbols, the memories, and the wounds associated with our pasts. Reprogramming the symbols that have caused us pain into tools for continual growth and evolution is a difficult but deeply healing process.

This is my vision for The Progressive Episcopal Church. It will not be a good fit for everyone, but if, in the depths of who and what you are, you recognize that you have a need to realize our unification with GOD and are willing to tear down anything that is in the way of that realization, The Progressive Episcopal Church might be a good fit for you.

¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering* (Onalaska: Buddhist Publication Society, 2011), 2.

The religious life is not one all people are called to. Even those of us who are driven to an authentic spirituality are not all called to the discipline that is the hallmark of the religious life. Most of us simply want to get up in the morning, live a full day, and come home at night in peace and comfort. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, there is much to be celebrated in such a life. But some of us are driven or called to something else. And meeting this call is something we must do with great care. The kind of care we take with choosing a life partner.

If you have recognized the need for realization of our unification with GOD as the fundamental aim of your spiritual life there are three criteria you should look at prior to choosing a spiritual tradition. First, the working model of the tradition needs to give a full picture as to the **nature of the barriers** to your realization of our unification with GOD. The human condition is a complicated one, and if the tradition does not have a model that accounts for the complicated nature of the human condition, and does not give strategies for the successful investigation and transformation of the contents of that condition, it is most likely flawed on a deep level and will leave you unfulfilled.² Second, the working model of the tradition needs to give a useful account regarding the **causes of the barriers** to our realization of our unification with GOD. It cannot stop with the symptoms, but must address the causes and describe them in such a way as to provide accurate and useful information.³ Third, the techniques of the tradition need to **remove the barriers** of your realization of our unification with GOD at the cause, while providing a way to deal with the symptoms to some degree. If the barriers are removed or transformed at a foundational level, many of the symptoms (such as emotional hyper-sensitivity) will disappear. However, these symptoms often manifest as habits, attributes, or character traits and their removal can leave us with a whole new set of problems. Thus, the techniques of the tradition needs to build into us the attributes that will habitually further our spiritual growth and personal evolution. This is perhaps the greatest argument for a graduated system of education within a spiritual tradition. If certain attributes are not in place when a particular barrier is removed, new and sometimes greater trauma can result.⁴ The concern of the following series of articles is how Progressive Christianity can provide the means for us to realize our unification with GOD in an ever-deepening and ever-evolving way, as well as how the discipline that is at the heart of Christianity builds the attributes necessary to continually further that realization while providing a foundation for living that realization within the world.

To see whether the Way of Christ, as I envision it in The Progressive Episcopal Church, is a viable vehicle for your realization of our unification with GOD, we must set it against the three criteria above: to see the nature of the barriers to our realization, the causes of the barriers to our realization, and the discipline offered as a remedy. The next article will address these three criteria.

✝ MANI

² Ibid, 4

³ Ibid, 5

⁴ Ibid

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

A very important part of church administration is maintaining accurate records. It is vitally important that we have current & complete contact information on all our clergy. Not only do we need everyone's current address, telephone number(s), email(s), etc, but also your emergency contact information, ministry website address, as well as your date(s) of ordination.

The Progressive Episcopal Church seeks membership in the International Council of Community Churches (ICCC). In order for this to happen, we must provide the ICCC with ordination and educational documentation for our clergy.

PLEASE take a few minutes to complete the Clergy Registration Form and return it to admin@tpecusa.org so we can have accurate and up-to-date information for you. Click [here](#) to open to the form on Google Drive.



Secretary's desk

March has been fairly busy, and much has been accomplished. The new domain name has been acquired, and ownership has been transferred. We also now have domain-based email. A web-based church administration software package has been purchased and installed on a secure server. For the first time we can fully and accurately maintain all needed information on our clergy including their ordination dates, birthdays, anniversaries, and emergency contact information. The system also allows us to track everyone's "Safe Church" certifications. The current canons do not include any requirements, but



the proposed new canons will require that ALL of our clergy be required to have completed comprehensive training for the protection & safety of children and vulnerable adults. The Progressive Episcopal Church does have a Child & Vulnerable Adult protection policy, which may be found on our website.

The website has been updated, and new things have been added here and there. We now include the news feed of the Anglican Communion News Service. Numerous hyperlinks were found to be outdated, and have been made current, and several of our forms had outdated targets for the "Submit" buttons.

We are also looking into exploring ministry partnerships, pulpit-sharing, and/or intercommunions with other clergy and denominations. There are many branches of the Old Catholic Church that share our vision and beliefs.

MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

Rev. Thurlow Weed - St Luke's Progressive Episcopal Mission
Lancaster, Ohio www.stlukepec.org



St Luke's Progressive Episcopal Mission is a "church-without-walls" that serves Lancaster, Ohio and surrounding areas of Fairfield, Perry, and Licking counties. I do not have any regularly scheduled services, but I'm available to conduct funerals, weddings, home communions, and other services upon request.

I'm in a generally conservative evangelical Republican stronghold here, and there are not very many Progressive Christian resources available here. Clergy are historically conservative, and although Lancaster has many LGBT residents, the community is very much underground. There are no mainline clergy here willing to officiate same-sex unions. Yet 35 miles away in the state capital are a great many resources and clergy. So, I'm essentially on an island here.

St Luke's Mission is barely a year old, and isn't really "out there" yet, but I'll see what 2015 brings. I did have a particularly memorable wedding to officiate on Valentine's Day in Newark, Ohio, some 35 miles from me. What made it memorable was that it was quite frigid – about 17 degrees – with snow and wind in the forecast. As it turned out, about 2/3 of my drive was through white-out conditions going about 10 miles per hour. Since the couple (both in their 40s) had first met on the front porch of a house 25 years earlier, it was on that same front porch where they wished to be married. The snow did finally stop and the sun came out, though it remained bitterly cold. Nonetheless, the two were married, and then everyone went back inside to thaw!

St Luke was a physician and an artist. Healing can take many forms – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, etc. Comforting or calming a distraught person is a form of healing. Assuring someone who is being bullied that they are beautiful and loved by God is a form of healing. Coming to the assistance of someone in need is a form of healing. Art in its many forms can bring healing as well. As a church organist and composer, my music has brought calm and healing to many people over the years (so I've been told). Thus, St Luke as a physician and artist was the natural name for my ministry. I was ordained to the TPEC priesthood on the Feast of St Luke, October 18, 2014 by the Rt Rev Michael W. Sherbert, OSB in a service that included portions of adapted Masonic ritual. I am canonically resident in the Diocese of Cumberland.

In addition to St Luke's, I'm organist & composer-in-residence at St Johns' Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Ohio, and also organist for Lancaster Lodge #57, F&AM. I share a house with my distant cousin, eight cats and two dogs. Genealogy is a great interest, and through my research I've learned that I have over a dozen bishops of the early church in the 3rd-4th centuries in my tree; my 49th & 51st great-grandfathers are also in my Apostolic Succession.

Before moving to Ohio I served as administrative secretary for St Paul's Church (ECUSA) in Key West, Florida, while also serving as Minister of Music for St Peter's Church (ECUSA).

Prayer corner

- For the families and friends of those lost on the Germanwings disaster, and fortitude for those faced with the grim task of recovering the many pieces of human remains.
- For those who feel the hurt of segregation as a result of “religious freedom” laws; we pray that the Spirit may bring Light of healing, that those who persecute may come to learn that all people are God’s creation, and made in his image & likeness.
- Continuing healing for +Linda Marie Nelson, who is doing better, but is still taking things carefully. She is looking forward to her daughter’s wedding this Fall!
- Continued healing for +Maryann Gonzalez, our ministry partner in Diocese of the South Progressive Episcopal Church.
- Pray for those around the world who are persecuted for the faith, or for any other reason.
- For the continuing work of all our clergy & faith communities, bringing the Light of God’s love and acceptance to those around us.

Eternal Spirit,
 Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
 Source of all that is and that shall be,
 Father and Mother of us all,
 Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
 The way of your justice be followed by the peoples
 of the world!
 Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
 Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
 sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
 In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
 In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
 From trials too great to endure, spare us.
 From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
 now and for ever. Amen.

--- from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

APRIL CALENDAR

Commemorations

- 21 – Anselm of Canterbury, 1109
- 23 – George, Patron of England, martyr, ca. 303
- 24 – Mellitus, 1st Bishop of London, 624
- 25 – St Mark, Evangelist
- 29 – Catherine of Siena, 1380
- 30 – Holy Abbots of Cluny, 10th-11th Cent.



Birthdays

- 25 REV FRANCESCA
FORTUNATO
- 29 REV JARROD
COCHRAN

Saint of the month : St. Mellitus

Mellitus (died 24 April 624) was the first Bishop of London in the Saxon period, the third Archbishop of Canterbury, and a member of the Gregorian mission sent to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons from their native paganism to Christianity. He arrived in 601 AD with a group of clergymen sent to augment the mission, and was consecrated as Bishop of London in 604. Mellitus was the recipient of a famous letter from Pope Gregory I known as the *Epistola ad Mellitum*, preserved in a later work by the medieval chronicler Bede, which suggested the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons be undertaken gradually, integrating pagan rituals and customs.

Mellitus was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 619. During his tenure, he was alleged to have miraculously saved the cathedral, and much of the town of Canterbury, from a fire. After his death in 624, Mellitus was revered as a saint.

Mellitus succeeded Laurence as the third Archbishop of Canterbury after the latter's death in 619. During his tenure as archbishop, Mellitus supposedly performed a miracle in 623 by diverting a fire that had started in Canterbury and threatened the church. He was carried into the flames, upon which the wind changed direction, thus saving the building. Bede praised Mellitus' sane mind, but other than the miracle, little happened during his time as archbishop.

Mellitus died on 24 April 624, and was buried at St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury that same day. He became revered as a saint after his death, and was allotted the feast day of 24 April. In the ninth century, Mellitus' feast day was mentioned in the *Stowe Missal*, along with Laurence and Justus. He was still venerated at St Augustine's in 1120, along with a number of other local saints. There was also a shrine to him at Old St Paul's Cathedral in London. --- from Wikipedia