



The New Epistle

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St Luke: Evangelist, Physician, Artist
October 18

From the Secretary General



September has been a difficult month. My mother made it to her 88th birthday on September 18. That day, her INR shot up to 10, and has remained there, and efforts to bring it down are not being met with much success. This, combined with a few other things, points to liver failure as part of multi-organ failure. She is also increasingly a shell; her essence, her soul, her spirit – I’m not really sure what it is – is not much there anymore. It is already moving on. I know there are many people who have

experienced this same sort of transition of spirit in the weeks before the death of a loved one. One of my frustrations is that the nurses at the nursing home are oblivious to this, and see only numbers on a chart that say “she’s OK” and “she’s still talking and eating and drinking just fine.” Yes, that may be true, but that is only the body. Without the spirit or essence, the body does not continue long. As of September 26, she is in hospice.

So I have much on my mind these days, and I jump a bit every time the telephone rings, wondering if it’s “the call” that could come at any time. And with her death coming soon, I must naturally leave my schedule completely free of any extras, like weddings and so forth. Only my usual Sunday & Monday church schedule, and even that may be suspended if she passes on a Saturday evening or in the wee hours of Sunday morning. I also find myself feeling tired or drained quite a bit. Then there is also the task of dealing with some 45-50 boxes, bags, and totes of all of her things I brought up from Florida; all must be sorted and dealt with. And somewhere in there I need to find time to also deal with cobwebs, dust, and shedding dog hair that one encounters when living in a large house with pets!

[*UPDATE*: My mother passed away shortly before 11pm on September 29th.]

But there are also other things that weigh on my mind. Our country has in less than a month been hit by no less than three major hurricanes. One region – Puerto Rico – has been almost completely destroyed. More on that shortly.

As a result of these natural disasters, there are many people in need of the three basics: food/water, clothing, and shelter. Tens of thousands in Florida are now homeless, with others suddenly unemployed because their place of employment was destroyed by hurricane. These are people with families to feed, and bills and mortgages to pay.

This brings me back to Puerto Rico, an island with a population of about 3.4 million people. That’s 3,400,000 people. No food. No water. No shelter. No electricity. No cellphone. No internet. No hospitals. No emergency services. No fuel. No employment. No income. Some

two million people instantly unemployed because their place of employment has been destroyed. Flash floods have destroyed many things that the hurricane may have spared. It is a humanitarian crisis one might generally tend to associate with a third world country, or somewhere in a war zone. But no. This is right here. At home. In America.

Thankfully, there are many resources coming to the aid of those in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the entire hurricane-stricken region of the Caribbean. Airfields in PR are being cleared so that fleets of C-130 aircraft may come in to deliver critically needed food and water, as well as medical supplies. As happened in the Florida Keys after Irma, it is very likely that field hospitals will be set up as soon as possible. United States military and civilian forces are “invading” PR to bring much needed disaster relief assistance to a bankrupt Territory.

There are several things to be learned here. One of them is twofold: Humility, and Thankfulness. Most of us in America have considerable abundance. Even if we are living on a shoestring budget from paycheck to paycheck, we still have a roof over our heads; a bed to sleep in; food and water; clothes to wear; a car to drive so we can get to work (or access to public transportation); access to gas to put in the car; electricity to run our lights, computers, washing machines; and in the cellphone age, we can be instantly connected to the rest of the world and our families.

Now imagine waking up one morning and discovering you have absolutely none of that. You have no food, no water, no clothing other than what you’re wearing, no gas for your car, no job, no electricity, no cellphone, no internet, no home. You have nothing except yourself. And everyone around you without exception has awoken to find themselves in the identical situation. And there are over three million of you.

It is very difficult for most of us to imagine ourselves in a situation like that. We’ve all experienced power outages, even ones that last a few days. But there is still some food in the larder, and if you are like me and still use a landline telephone, you will still have phone service. You know the electricity will be restored before you run out of food. And even though the power is out for three or four days, you still have running water. And you still have natural gas so you can cook and have hot water. You still have many amenities; though you have to adapt a bit, things are still essentially normal. You still have a job. You still have a car to drive, and there are gas stations around that are not affected by the power outage. If you have a medical emergency, you can still go to the hospital.

Now imagine none of that. If you live in a big city of 500,000 or more people, perhaps a city of 1-2 million people. Let’s say you live in Chicago. The population of Chicago is 2.7 million. Imagine yourself living in Chicago with no electricity, no water, no sewer, no food (other than

what's in your larder), no cellphone service, no subway, no public transportation, nowhere to live, and no job. Oh, and every single building in the entire city has been destroyed. You no longer have a job because where you work no longer exists. You're now competing with almost three million other people for food, water, and shelter. What do you do? How do you survive? This is what the people of Puerto Rico are facing right now.

This is *also* what people in war-torn countries such as Syria have been dealing with for many years.

Most of us in America have never experienced such hardships. Many people who have gone to Texas and Florida to help with relief work come back truly humbled by what they have seen, and realised what luxury they have at home, compared to tens of thousands who now suddenly have nothing.

Mary Baker Eddy, who founded the Christian Science movement, taught that "Divine love always has met and always will meet every human need." That Divine Love works through us, using our hands and feet. It is the central teaching of the one called Jesus of Nazareth. It is found throughout his teachings; the Parable of the Good Samaritan is but one example. His teaching about how a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven is yet another.

These natural disasters are a terrible price, but they remind us of our responsibility to our human family. Where there is a need, we must rise up to meet that need, to the best of our ability. If we don't have the resources or ability to meet the need, the very least we can do is either try to find the resources, or to make the need known to those who DO have the resources. Then you have done your part to help your human family in need. This is not only our responsibility as followers of Jesus, but also our responsibility as humans.

And in light of those who have lost absolutely everything except their lives in these hurricanes, we may learn humility. We still have food, water, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. We tend to take them for granted, but they are luxuries. When you go the toilet and attend to your needs, simply having a toilet, and being able to flush it is a luxury, a blessing. Likewise your shower or tub. That cup of coffee you brewed? You have running water, you have coffee beans and coffee filters. You have a coffee pot or coffee maker. You have a mug or cup to pour your coffee into and drink it from. These are luxuries. Be thankful for them, because they number among God's blessings. All these little things we take for granted are luxuries that we can in humility ascribe as blessings from God. It is only when we are involuntarily deprived of these luxuries that we realise they are in fact *luxuries*. All too often it is only then that we discover the abundance that we've had, and that we may not have appreciated for what it was.

Many of us have had life experiences where we've fallen hard, very hard. But in the end we learned valuable lessons, and we realise that if it weren't for that hard fall, we would never have learned what we needed to.

We have now in our own back yard just such a fall. It is very close to home, and it affects each and every one of us. It is exacerbated by our country's leadership continuing to want to deprive its citizens of healthcare, and continuing to clamour for nuclear war; they largely ignore the basic human needs and the welfare of their own people. We are also seeing a considerable rise in the poison of nationalism, which seeks to place prideful arrogance over the needs of their neighbours. For most like this, the fall will be quite hard when it comes; hopefully the lesson will be learned.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, we must remember that the Samaritans were considered to be the human scum of the earth. They were worse than tax collectors. Yet it was the Samaritan who came to the assistance of the robbery victim. Two people who would have otherwise remained at a distance were brought together to attend to a basic human need. Jesus teaches us that we are united by our common humanity, and that our "differences" are man-made and not of God; that we must learn to divest ourselves of such manufactured differences and accept our humanity. No one is a "scum of the earth," though I confess that this truth is challenging when dealing with some who hold political office. It helps to think of them as sheep that are just hopelessly lost.

This is what God requires of us, and nothing more. We must seek justice. We must love mercy. And we must walk humbly with God.

Now go. Go, and do whatever is in your ability and resources to help those in need in the wake of three devastating hurricanes. And don't forget the wildfire victims in the Pacific Northwest.

And count your blessings, for they are many. Share them.





International Council of Community Churches

"That They May All Be One"

It has been a long time in coming, but the Progressive Episcopal Church is now a full member of the International Council of Community Churches. The ICCC, in turn, is a member of the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and of Churches Uniting in Christ.

The International Council of Community Churches is an international, intercultural, interracial fellowship of churches and ministry centers which seeks Christian unity in local, national and world relations.

As people devoted to following Christ, we are committed to community, to treasuring diversity, to living our faith in service and love.

From the ICCC website:

Our Mission

As people devoted to following Christ we are committed to community, to treasuring diversity, to living our faith in service and love.

Our Vision

To affirm individual freedom of conscience.

To protect and promote congregational self-determination.

To proclaim that the love of God, which united, can overcome any division.

To be an integral partner in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

History:

In 1950, the Biennial Council of the Peoples Church of Christ and Community Centers led by Dr. Joseph M. Evans (until then all Afro-American) and the National Council of Community Churches led by the Rev. Roy A. Burkhardt (until then all Caucasian) joined in a historic merger. At the time, their joining represented the largest interracial merger of religious bodies in America. The new creation was the International Council of Community Churches. Member churches united to be a fellowship of ecumenically minded, freedom-loving congregations cooperating in fulfilling the mission of the Church in the world. As a post-denominational movement, the Council has witnessed and worked for Christian unity, justice and reconciliation in human society. That is the work we consistently carry into the future.

This is a great milestone for us as a denomination, and bears testimony of our place in the global community of Christ and the universal message of peace and reconciliation. You can learn more about the Council on their website, <http://www.iccnw.org/>.



St Luke: Evangelist, Physician, Artist

The Feast of St Luke is observed on October 18. In addition to being the author of one of the Gospels and the book of Acts, he is believed to have been a physician living in the Greek city of Antioch in Syria. A Christian tradition starting in the 8th century states that he was the first icon painter. He is said to have painted pictures of the Virgin Mary and Child, in particular the Hodegetria image in Constantinople (now lost). Starting from the 11th century a number of painted images were venerated as his autograph works, including for example, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa and Our Lady of Vladimir. He was also said to have painted Saints Peter and Paul, and to have illustrated a gospel book with a full cycle of miniatures. The traditional symbol of Luke is an ox or a bull, usually depicted with wings.

As followers of The Way, we are all called upon to by physicians to one another, healing as we are able the spirits and minds of those around us in need. A kind word, a meal given, a trip to the market to get groceries for someone who is home-bound, coming to the aid of someone in distress There are so many ways in which we can bring healing into the world around us. In this way we become artists creating a work of spiritual beauty.

We have – as a result of numerous tragedies of both natural and human manufacture – a multitude of opportunities to bring healing to the world around us. The wildfires in the Pacific Northwest have left hundreds of families homeless; these fire have been both natural and man-made. One was sparked by teenagers throwing intentionally firecrackers into dry leaves.

Then there are the three major hurricanes that struck the United States: Harvey in Texas, Irma in Florida, and Maria in Puerto Rico. The last one was by far the worst, as it has left the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and its population of 3.4 million people without electricity, running water, cellphone service, internet, food, and a host of other necessities. Morgues in hospitals are full, but there are currently no operational mortuaries. There have been a number of reports of deaths in more remote areas where the dead are buried by family members in the back yard of what is left of their home. Nearly 3,000 miles of electric poles and wires have been completely destroyed and must be replaced; 80% of the entire electric grid must be replaced, but the electric utility is bankrupt and there is no money available to rebuild the grid. To compound the matter, there are not enough workers with the skills necessary to rebuild the grid. Thousands of miles of roads are impassible or destroyed, which is preventing help and supplies from reaching many areas. It is a storm-caused humanitarian crisis that is unparalleled anywhere in the world.

And just yesterday (2 October) we read of the horrific massacre in Las Vegas, leaving (at last count) 58 dead, and well over 500 wounded.

The Baptismal Covenant in the *Book of Common Prayer* includes these two questions: *Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*

We have been presented with opportunities on a massive scale to respond “*I will, with God’s help.*” Whether it is raising awareness of a need or standing at a distribution center handing out water and food to those in need, or

connecting people to the resources they need, there is opportunity at every level to respect each other's dignity as human beings, creations of God, who are in need.

There are millions in our human community who have lost everything in the wake of natural disasters, not only in the United States, but also Mexico, Bangladesh, and other areas.

When we do our part to help those who are adversely affected by human and natural disasters, we are like St Luke, who brought healing into the world as a physician. Not only is there healing of body through the aid of medicine, there is also the healing of spirit and soul through deeds done. Jesus himself reminds us many times that we are to help those in need; "As ye have do for the least of these, ye have done unto me." And the Apostle James reinforces this when he writes that "Faith without works is dead."

There is much healing needed in our world today. In the United States alone, there is healing desperately needed for those affected by tragedies. There is also a desperate healing needed of the soul of the nation itself, a nation whose leaders are indifferent to the sufferings and deprivations of their own people.

May be all do our part – in word and deed – to the best of our ability – to bring healing of body, mind, soul, and spirit to the world around us. And if you are someone in need of that healing, know that you will find it. Know that you are surrounded and filled with God's Light.



 <h1 style="margin: 0;">October 2017</h1> 						
Copr. 2016, Ashby Co., Erie, Pa.		Churchman's Ordo Edition				
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost 1 Proper 21 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.L.D.	[The Holy Guardian Angels] 2 [Various Occasions 3 - of the Holy Angels, Glo.Cr.Pr.f.Tri.]	[Therese of Lisieux, 1897] 3 [Common of a Saint I, Glo.Cr.Pr.f.St.1]	Francis of Assisi, Friar, 1226 4 Glo.Pr.f.St.3	Feria 5	William Tyndale, Priest, 1536 [Bruno, Founder of the Carthusians, 1101] 6 Pr.f.Epi. [Common of a Monastic II, Glo.Pr.f.St.2]	[Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary] 7 [See Propers for May 31 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.Inc. or BVM (TASB)]
The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost 8 Proper 22 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.L.D.	Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1253 9 Glo.Pr.f.St.1	[Paulinus, First Archbishop of York, 644] 10 [Common of a Pastor II, Glo.Pr.f.St.2]	[Motherhood of the BVM] [Philip the Evangelist] 11 [Propers for May 31 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.Inc. or BVM (TASB)] [Common of a Missionary II, Glo.Pr.f.Pen.]	[Wilfred, Archbishop of York, 709] 12 [Common of a Pastor II, Glo.Pr.f.St.2]	[Edward the Confessor, King of England, 1066] 13 [Common of a Saint I, Glo.Pr.f.St.1]	Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, Bishop of Shanghai, 1906 14 Glo.Pr.f.Pen.
The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost 15 Proper 23 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.L.D.	Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer, 1555, 1556 - R or W [Gall, Monk and Hermit, c. 630] 16 Pr.f.St.1 [Common of a Monastic I, Glo.Pr.f.St.2]	Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and Martyr, c. 115 [Brideswife of Oxford, 735 - W] 17 Glo.Pr.f.St.3 [Common of a Monastic II, Glo.Pr.f.St.2]	SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST 18 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.A.S.	Henry Martyn, Priest, and Missionary to India and Persia, 1812 19 Glo.Pr.f.St.2	Feria ✠ 20	BVM on Saturday 21 Propers for May 31 Glo.Pr.f.Inc. or BVM (TASB)
The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost 22 Proper 24 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.L.D.	SAINT JAMES OF JERUSALEM, Brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Martyr, c. 62 23 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.A.S.	[St. Raphael the Archangel] 24 [Various Occasions 3, Glo.Cr.Pr.f.Tri.]	Feria 25	Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons, 899 26 Glo.Pr.f.Bap.	Feria ✠ 27	SAINT SIMON AND SAINT JUDE, APOSTLES 28 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.Ap.
The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost [Christ the King - W] 29 Proper 25 Glo.Cr.Pr.f.L.D.	Feria 30	Feria 31	READINGS Mass — Year A Office — Year One Weekday Eucharistic Readings for use throughout the year are found in LFF, pages 498-528. See Notes on Reverse [] - In some Places	Glo.—Gloria Cr.—Creed Pr.f.—Proper Preface of Adv.—Advent Inc.—Incarnation Epi.—Epiphany H.Wk.—Holy Week Eas.—Easter Asc.—Ascension	Pen.—Pentecost Tri.—Trinity Sunday A.S.—All Saints St.—Saint Ap.—Apostles Ded.—Dedication Bap.—Baptism L.D.—Lord's Day	Days of Special Devotion are noted with ✠