

On the mind of parishioner Susan Ridgeway

Four years ago, through a program called ‘Renewal Works’, our parish undertook a deep assessment to determine where we are, as individuals and as a congregation, on our spiritual and theological journey together. One of the things that evolved out of that process was the formation of a Spiritual Development Committee, tasked with thinking of ideas to bring us even closer to one another and to God.

One of the questions asked in the ‘Renewal Works’ exercise awakened me to a huge personal revelation. The question was basically “where, on a continuum, are each of us in our personal relationship with God. Are we in the early stages, do we have a solid yet maturing relationship or, is God at the center of our lives?” My response was that I believed I had a pretty solid relationship with God. But I couldn’t say God was at the center of my life because I didn’t feel I was good enough yet. If God was at the center of my life, then surely it would show in how very, very good I was.

But when I reviewed my answers again, and came to that question, I pondered, and I said to myself, “Wait. Every good thing you do is based on knowing it’s what God expects. And when you have a question, you ask yourself ‘What would God want me to do?’”. So, I realized, it doesn’t matter how much perfection I’ve achieved or not, God is still the reason for my wanting and striving to do better. And I also find myself talking to God everyday all day long. A very fond memory may pop into my head and with a tear of gratitude, I spontaneously say “Thank You, God” or, I may be anxious about something, and I’ll say out loud or in my head “God, please help me out”. I have these 3–4-word dialogues with God dozens of times a day. Yes, God is at the center of my life.

So, when the Spiritual Development Committee was formed, I jumped at the chance to participate. Some of the first fruits of the committee included making sure Scripture or spiritual reflection are incorporated in every forum or gathering. Another initiative was asking parishioners to provide ‘Spiritual Tips’ for the weekly e-minder. The ‘Spiritual Tips’ evolved into a book of 40 meditations that was distributed for Lent one year.

We also embarked on a program sponsored by the broader Episcopal Church, called ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ during the 11 days between Ascension Day and the Day of Pentecost, when we dialed in by conference call each night for a special evening worship. At the time it was revolutionary, but now we do such things by Zoom on an almost daily basis. That call-in worship was wonderful and set a peaceful tone for the night.

As a parishioner, I have so much gratitude and love for Church of the Incarnation. I feel blessed to have such gifted clergy serving us and to have made so many wonderful friendships. Some of my closest and dearest friends are people I’ve met through this parish. What a gift! And the opportunities to learn and grow and be involved are endless. Through church activities, I have gained not only spiritual growth, but social and practical skills that have enriched all other parts of my life.

Incarnation offers us ways to engage in activities that foster personal growth, bring us together in community and fellowship, help us minister to each other and to others, and help us grow in our faith and our theological knowledge. Some of those things include:

- Ushering
- Teaching Sunday School
- Serving on the Vestry
- Being a Lay Reader
- Attending Sunday Bible Study
- Serving on Altar Guild, Hospitality Committee or Social Life Committee
- Participating in book groups other Christian formation opportunities, such as Education for Ministry (EfM) and Sacred Ground
- Working with Moravian Open Door
- Volunteering with Hour Children
- Participating in Operation Santa
- Offering Spiritual Tips and Reflections
- Helping decorate for the holidays

In light of Covid, the Spiritual Development Committee has been on a bit of a hiatus, but we are planning to re-convene it again very soon. If you are interested in being part of the committee, contact the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee at nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org.

Lent is an opportunity for spiritual growth and transformation. So, whether you give up something or take something on, I invite you to consider trying something new that you may not normally take part in. Consider ushering, or participating in

a book group, or one of the external ministries such as Moravian Open Door, or any new forum that comes up. Try something new and see where it takes you!

Wishing You God's Peace,
Susan Ridgeway

TODAY AFTER CHURCH!

12:30 to 1:00 p.m. Bring your coffee and grab a seat near the front of the church for a roundtable discussion with the preacher about the sermon. This will be a time when you can ask questions, give feedback, and in general, help us all to deepen the conversation that the sermon has only just begun.

CONFIRMATION AND INQUIRERS' CLASS – Wednesday, March 16

7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Our yearly Confirmation and Inquirers' Class continues in the Parish House (and also on Zoom) with "The Book of Common Prayer: Worship and Practice." All are welcome, even if you aren't registered for the entire class. Email the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser at adannhauser@churchoftheincarnation.org with any questions.

FREEING JESUS BOOK DISCUSSION – Thursday, March 17

7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Our Lenten Book Discussion on *Freeing Jesus* continues in the Parish House (and also on Zoom). The Rev. Deacon Denise LaVetty will lead this week's discussion on chapter 2, Jesus as Teacher. All are welcome, even if you haven't read the book. Email Nate at nelee@churchoftheincarnation.org with any questions.

20s/30s GROUP GOES TO HOUR CHILDREN – Saturday, March 19

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Young adults in their 20s/30s are invited to serve at Hour Children with the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser and the Rev. Deacon Denise LaVetty. We'll meet with Program Coordinator Kellie Phelan, who will introduce us to the Food Pantry ministry, Hour Teen Scene, and other mentoring and volunteer programs. Then we'll spend some time in the Food Pantry itself — cleaning, organizing, and preparing for the week ahead. **RSVP to Adrian.** *Hour Children is located at 36-11 12th St., Long Island City and easily accessible by the F train.*

LENTEN DRIVE FOR BABY SUPPLIES

Throughout Lent, we are collecting baby supplies — diapers, formula, food, wipes, etc. — for Hour Children, an organization that helps incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their children successfully rejoin their communities. Pick up a flyer in the Narthex and scan the QR code to access Incarnation's Hour Children Amazon storefront. Purchase from the list of needed supplies online or drop off baby supplies at the church.

EVERY WEEK AT INCARNATION

Sunday Bible Study: Bible Study is held in the Parish House (and via Zoom) on Sundays from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. (Masks are required.) We generally follow the Yale Bible Study program, which offers course materials on select books of the Bible, deepened by insights from Yale Divinity School professors.

Sunday School for Children: During the 11:00 a.m. service, children ages 3 to 10 depart the service with their teachers for Sunday School in the Parish House. (Masks are required, and all teachers have been vaccinated.) They return before the end of worship. See our website, churchoftheincarnation.org, for more information on Children and Family Ministries.

Wednesday Holy Eucharist: Join us each Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. for this Rite I spoken service of Holy Eucharist, which includes a brief homily and organ music.

Thursday Candlelight Communion: Join us each Thursday at 6:15 p.m. for Candlelight Communion, a service of Holy Eucharist that incorporates chant and silence as well as elements of contemporary worship. This service is informal and contemplative, with music led by a Cantor and a brief reflection by one of the clergy. You can also stream this service at youtube.com/churchoftheincarnation.

Daily Office: Services of Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/worship.

To receive access information for offerings held via Zoom, join our email distribution list by filling out the yellow Connect Card found in your pew or signing up through our website.