

On the mind of Senior Warden Susan Ridgeway...

While life is always a learning experience, at the age of 68, I feel like I have a pretty good idea of what makes my life meaningful. For me, it is having really good friends whom I love and trust, it is being there for those people for better or worse, and it is putting my Christian faith into practice. While I believe we are “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1), I also believe, for me personally, that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). I say “for me personally” because doing good works may be out of reach for the homeless person lying on the street, the family digging itself out of the rubble of war, the person fighting their way out of an addiction, or those dealing with any other of life’s immense struggles.

So, I devote myself to trying to be there for my friends and family and also helping those who have no bootstraps by which to pull themselves up. I want to save the world. I know I can’t do that. But while I’m here, I can do small things that make this world a little brighter. A wonderful manager I once worked for said, “small gestures send big messages”. I have always remembered that. And small deeds of kindness and compassion can also make a big difference. Here in New York City, we have a motherlode of opportunities, each day, to make a difference.

This fall, for one of our parish book reads, we chose *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Really Matters*. In reading the book, I found myself a little surprised to discover how many different philosophies there are for making life meaningful. From Confucius and the Buddha to Nietzsche and Plato and Native Americans, we all have different views about how to live meaningfully. And, while *A Life Worth Living* didn’t result in any seismic revelation for me, it did provide me with a new tool, the **Examen**, developed by St. Ignatius, to help me along my faith journey.

I don’t normally make New Year’s resolutions but, this year, I decided to make the **Examen** part of my spiritual practice. Following is an outline for daily practice. (Note: with Lent coming soon, this could be a good Lenten practice.)

- 1) **Gratitude:** Think through your day and give thanks for what you are grateful for. *(That’s an easy one!)*
- 2) **Review:** Remember each hour of the day, noticing where you felt God’s presence and where you either entered into or turned away from God’s activity in your midst.
- 3) **Sorrow:** Recall actions for which you are sorry.
- 4) **Forgiveness:** Ask for God’s forgiveness. Make plans to reconcile with anyone you have hurt and to forgive and reconcile with those who have hurt you. *(This one is my toughest challenge. I could really use some prayers here!)*
- 5) **Grace:** Ask for God’s grace for the coming day and an increased ability to recognize God’s presence.

Wish me luck in putting this all into practice and keeping it up!

Finally, below are a couple of favorite quotes from Henry David Thoreau:

- “Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?”
- “To have made even one person’s life a little better, that is too succeed.”

I wish you all a beautiful New Year. Please pray that it brings us all...everywhere...renewed Peace.

“Life is short. We do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who walk this way with us. So, be swift to love and make haste to be kind.” Henri Frederic Amiel.

Susan

TODAY AFTER CHURCH

Visitors are invited to pick up a welcome bag at the back of the church following the service. All are welcome to Coffee Hour in the Parish House.

12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Come to the Parish House Dining Room to help make sandwiches and pack lunches for Ecclesia Ministries of New York, which serves those who are food and housing insecure. The Rev. Deacon Denise LaVetty serves an Ecclesia congregation that currently worships at Church of the Transfiguration (29th Street, between 5th and Madison) every Sunday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Parishioners are also invited to attend this 2:00 p.m. service of Holy Eucharist and then distribute the lunches.

LIFE WORTH LIVING WRAP-UP

Thursday, January 18, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Join us in the Assembly Hall for a forum to wrap up our Fall book study on Miroslav Volf's *Life Worth Living*. This past Fall, three small groups in our parish explored the question: "What Makes Life Worth Living?" During our January "Third Thursday" program, the three groups will reconvene all together for a time of discussion on what was learned. This event promises to be an enriching time of reflecting on "the meaning of life"—whether or not you joined a group or read the book.

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 21, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. The Annual Meeting features brief reports from parish leadership as well as voting in the 2024 Vestry Election. All parishioners are invited and encouraged to attend. The meeting will be held in the Assembly Hall.

THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY: ON FALLING IN LOVE WITH GOD

Wednesdays, January 24 through March 13, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. What is the "heart" of Christianity? In this new series, we will explore the essential beliefs of the Christian faith, focusing on the one truth that unites all others: *God is love*. Over the course of eight weeks, we will think about how the picture of God as love grounds our understanding of the Trinity, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and various aspects of our life together as Christians. Classes will be held on eight consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the Parish House. Participants also have the option to join by Zoom.

This series also serves as preparation for the Sacramental Rite of Confirmation. **Confirmation Sunday will be March 17, when we welcome the Rt. Rev. Matthew Heyd as our confirming Bishop.**

Email the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee at nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org to learn more and register.

GOD OF THE OPPRESSED

Sunday, February 24, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. As we kick off Black History Month, the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee will lead a forum on a movement known as "Black Liberation Theology."

Black Liberation Theology arose following the Civil Rights movement as a way of trying to recover central aspects of the Christian faith that had been forgotten during American slavery and the Jim Crow era. It declared that, in Christ, oppressed people found a God who was not only one with them, but one of them—a God who took on the nature of a slave, and suffered the injustices of oppression, false accusation and punishment, and an ignoble death (Phil. 2:6-8).

We will also be joined for this forum by our new friend Greg Garrett, who is Canon Theologian at the American Cathedral in Paris, and Carole McDaniel Hanks Chair of Literature and Culture at Baylor University. Greg is the author of dozens of books and gave an electric forum on James Baldwin at Incarnation last October. He is sure to add much to the conversation!

EVERY WEEK AT INCARNATION

Sunday Bible Study: Bible Study is held in the Parish House from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School and Nursery Care for Children: During the 11:00 a.m. service, children ages 3 to 9 (pre-K through 4th grade) depart the service with their teacher for Sunday School in the Parish House. Nursery care is provided in the Parish House from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Learn more about Family Ministries at Incarnation, including offerings for older children, on the church website.

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, organ music, and healing prayer with holy oil.

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 and Compline are held via Zoom. To view the weekly schedule, go to churchoftheincarnation.org/worship.