

*"Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her." (John 20:18)*

Dear people of St. Philip's,

This week our Episcopal Church celebrates the powerful witness of Christ's transforming presence in the life of Mary Magdalene, a woman whom the Gospel of Luke states was "healed of seven demons". In Jesus' day, such a woman would have been completely off-limits to be in association with ANY men, much less a whole group of men following in the way of their Master, Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, there she was, Mary Magdalene, faithful, filled with the love of Jesus who made her whole. In her wholeness she becomes what some call "Apostle to the Apostles", the one person whom each of the 4 gospels says is present at the tomb of Jesus, the first to see Christ resurrected, the first to bear witness: "I saw the Master; he is alive."

This week I found myself struggling to find Christian witnesses to guide me in my efforts to keep my eyes upon Jesus, bearing witness to the hope we find in his teachings of love of all humanity. The strife of our world, amplified by political vitriol, makes it hard to know just where Jesus is these days. Confusing matters even more are the voices who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ while at the same time hurling accusations of hate and evil toward public leaders. What sort of society are we really, and how we will be able to claim a God of love for all in this cacophony of chaos?

And then I turned to my mug of coffee, depicting the winner of the 2016 Episcopal "Lent Madness", German martyr theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and I am amused. Here before me was a sign of hope in the lasting power of Christ's message of bringing dignity to all humanity, even when there are humans who would claim in the name of God to judge others unworthy. Before he was imprisoned as a resister to Nazi imperialism, Bonhoeffer was an extraordinary theologian. He was the first Christian theologian to make a profound and meaningful connection of the social community as an ethical influence of the individual.

"Persons in relation to each other and to their communities are intrinsically social-ethical-historical beings...God does not desire a history of individual men [people] but a history of the community of men [people]. Nor does he desire a community which absorbs the individual into itself, but a community of persons...The structures of the individual and the collective unit are the same. Upon these basic relations rests the concept of the religious community and the church... This is nothing less than 'Christ existing as the congregation.' [Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ, John W. de Gruchy, p. 6]

For example, as Mary Magdalene first received the healing love of Jesus when she turned to him in faith, then was fully embraced into Jesus' community of believers who were following a way of love, the whole community benefited from one another's faithful presence. When Jesus died and rose again as Christ, the Risen Lord, it was Mary who bore witness to the larger community, then together they all received further revelations of Christ's presence.



In Bonhoeffer's day of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. ripping of society through powerful individuals separating the broader community for individual self-aggrandize-ment, he was able to articulate the dangers. Even before the rise of Hitler as a world-wide threat, Bonhoeffer wrote a Christian theology reminding us that as individual persons we are to live our lives receiving the individual grace of God through Jesus Christ, and become a part of the community of believers who collectively live into that grace. When we carry one another along through forgiveness of sins, making ethical choices for the good of the whole community, then we create the dwelling place where Christ lives fully. Both our individual and our collective ethics matter.

In a time when some would have us recoil in fear of what evil humans can heap upon fellow human beings, I struggle but do eventually through quiet reflection and study of Christian history, find God's love once again. It is right here in the person of Jesus Christ, living in our community of Christians at St. Philip's, who offer love—no matter what. "Whoever you are, where ever you are in your journey of faith, you are welcome here."

Peace to you in Christ, *Pastor Mary*



NOTE: Pastor Mary will be away from July 27-August 12. Please welcome the Rev. Tom Sramek as our guest priest on July 31, and the Rev. Lucretia Mann August 7.

***This Week: July 24—30***

Thu., 5 pm, **Food Pantry**, Foyer  
 Fri., 10:30, **Meditation**, Sanctuary  
 Sat., 5 pm, **Overnight Guests**, PH

**SAVE THE DATE**

Sep 23 **Youth Big Sur Campout**  
 Oct 8 **Youth Feed Shelter Guests**  
 Feb 3-5, '17 **Winter Retreat**, Lake Tahoe



**Attention All Youth: Today!  
 1st Annual Croquet Tournament**

**9:45** Sign ups  
**10:30** Tournament Starts  
**12:00-1:30** Potluck Lunch/Prizes Awarded

***Fran Soulé Memorial Services:***

*August 20th: Private service for the Soulé family, Santa Barbara.*  
**September or later:** A community celebration of Fran's life at St. Philip's.

**6th Annual Recovery Retreat  
 Working Steps 6 & 7: Identifying  
 our Unique Temperament**

August 5-7  
 See flyers on bulletin board near door

**LOOKING for A  
 Bible Study? Join us:**

**Sundays at 9:00 AM  
 Currently studying PROVERBS!**