Dear Friends,

The question that has been on my mind is: How do we respond to the problems of 2020 as Christians and as the church? Obviously, the global coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we live and caused a great deal of suffering and death. In addition, we have seen reports of violence that remind us of the struggles the U.S. has with racism. Politically, our country is badly polarized; it is not uncommon for people to respond with hate toward people that disagree with their views.

Recently, people have become more isolated from each other and the church, a result of the closing of our church buildings for a time and our current restrictions on in-person worship. The usual activities of daily life have changed; some people find themselves in difficult financial situations. How can the church help people who are suffering? Reaching out to those in need and helping them with their struggles is an important response. We learned how to use technology to stay connected and worship together from our homes. By prayer and action, we can help people to adjust to the new reality.

Promoting social justice is an important role for God’s people. We are created in the image of God and we must honor that image in others. Old Testament laws required God’s people to treat others fairly and to advocate for the most vulnerable in society. In the New Testament, Jesus calls us to love each other as God loves us. “To love” is an action. It means we must work for the best for all people, even those we don’t like. It is the church’s calling to be a voice for social justice in our society.

Our polarization is a political crisis. We need to unite as a country. This means we must learn to get along with each other even when we disagree about what our government should or should not do. This begins by respecting (“to love”) one other. We must not insult people with whom we disagree. Once we can talk to each other, we can try to find areas where we can agree and work to come up with actions that we all can support.

But these are short and very general answers to big and quite complex questions. Starting Thursday, September 17th, at 6:00 pm, I will offer an Adult Forum via Zoom to talk about a Christian response to these issues. We will spend 45 minutes each week discussing one issue and will conclude with the short service of Compline in the Book of Common Prayer. Next month, I will send out a Zoom invitation and the
questions we will consider each week. I hope you will join me in this important conversation.

Please give me a call or send me an email if you would like more information about the adult class. I am always happy to hear from you. My cell phone is 803-361-7519.

Faithfully yours,
Alan+

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

In union, O Lord, with your faithful people at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, I desire to offer to you praise and thanksgiving. I remember your death, Lord Christ; I proclaim your resurrection; I await your coming in glory. And since I cannot receive you today in the Sacrament of your Body and Blood, I beseech you to come spiritually into my heart. Cleanse and strengthen me with your grace, Lord Jesus, and let me never be separated from you. May I live in you, and you in me, in this life and in the life to come. Amen

ADVENT CHRISTIAN FORMATION PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND EVENTS

Following its August 10th virtual meeting, the Advent Education Committee confirmed the following activities for this fall:

- **Adult Bible Study** will resume online sessions Monday evening, September 14th, at 6:30 p.m. to begin studying of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The Zoom link is [https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5312528003](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5312528003) Meeting ID: 531 252 8003.;
- **Advent Adult Forum**, “Being a Christian in 2020” will begin online Thursday evening, September 17th, at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome. The Zoom link is [https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5312528003](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5312528003) Meeting ID: 531 252 8003. Please contact the rector for further information on these two above items fatheralan@bellsouth.net ;
- **Education for Ministry (EfM)** commences its second year in the parish and will resume as an online group, currently with eight registrants, Wednesday evening, September 9th, from 7-9 p.m. Participants will be studying Year One (OT), Year 2 (NT), or Year 4 (Theology & Interfaith topics), respectively. Contact Sam Wilson for further information (434-392-8123), samwilsonjr46@gmail.com ;
- Four parishioners have registered to attend the online 20-hour diocesan course on antiracism, from September 11th-October 2nd. Information is available on the diocesan website ([www.dioceseofnj.org](http://www.dioceseofnj.org)) or in its weekly eNewsletter. Partial scholarships towards tuition fees are available from the parish’s Adult Education Fund; and,
• Planning for offering Children’s Christian Formation/Sunday school lessons and activities in a pandemic environment continues. Possible suitable resources and methods are being studied. Stay tuned for more information on this initiative.

• The Advent Education Committee (Fr. Alan, Cal Stafford, Karann Murphy, Trisha Andrzejczak, Meredith Markley, Pat Keltie, and Sam Wilson) next meet online September 1st at 3:00 p.m. If there are any items or issues you would like us to consider, contact any member before then, and it will be added to the agenda. Or if you would like to participate in the meeting, contact the Fr. Alan.

—Sam Wilson, Chairperson, Advent Education Committee

ADVENT MUSTARD SEED PROJECT No. 5

Advent’s Mustard Seed Change Jar Campaign, the annual parish fund-raising effort to provide financial support to the Collateral Repair Project (CRP), a non-governmental organization (NGO) to resettle Syrian families displaced by civil war, started this year on the First Sunday in Lent (Feb. 26th) and was to conclude the Second Sunday in Easter (Apr 19th). Over the past four years our parish has donated c. $3000 in collected “pocket change” for relocation and “start up” assistance to scores of persons—men, women, and children—who seek safety from the ravages of indiscriminately lethal warfare in that region. Many were forced to leave behind all possessions except for those hand-carried. They seek to start new lives in neighboring Jordan, where the CRP strives to help meet the costs of feeding, clothing, providing basic necessities, job training, and start up living arrangements. Last year, Advent’s efforts enabled the equivalent of 10 families to meet transitional living costs for a month. A dollar goes a long way there!

To supplement Advent’s unilateral efforts, our outreach committee this winter sought and was awarded in early January 2020, a grant by our diocesan Global Goals Sustainable Development Fund committee in the amount of $750. This maximum award grant (renewable pending Advent’s continued local efforts) was given because of our parish’s grassroots, liturgically-underscored work over the past four years. Our donations synergize with other fund sources, such as local Anglican Church aid in Amman, Jordan.

The CRP board of directors chairperson recently acknowledged with deep gratitude receipt of the Global Goals grant. It arrived at a critical time when other NGOs in the region are shutting down for lack of funds. This unfortunate trend increases the demand on the CRP to take in greater numbers of refugees. It also raises the prospect of having to turn applicant families back into the desert-based tent cities encamped in “no man’s land” which stretch for miles on the Syrian-Jordanian frontier.

The New Testament parable of the mustard seed is used by Jesus to emphasize the profound results achieved by the smallest faithful effort. The parable is found in all three of the three synoptic gospels (Matthew 13: 31-32; Mark 4: 30-32; and Luke 13:18-19). Inspired by this theme, participating parishioners (and visitors!) receive a canning jar during the Lent 1 Sunday service liturgy. Each contains a tiny, “blessed” mustard seed in which to collect daily spare change over an eight-week period. The jars were to be ingathered during 2nd Easter Sunday worship services. However, by this date we were no longer worshipping together in church. We ask you now to deliver your Mustard Seed jars with your collected change to church on Sunday morning or to the
church office during office hours, so that we can count and forward our contributions to the Collateral Repair Project.

The amount received is totaled, deposited, and our outreach committee treasurer dispatches a check directly to the CRP (usually supplemented by the committee’s own donation). The parish then receives a final report of the outcome in The Anchor parish newsletter. Closing this information loop reminds us of the truth of Jesus’ parable reflected in the positive change in faraway lives aided by Advent’s giving of our faithfully collected pocket change.

Sam Wilson, Jr.

ECW NOTES

Due to the requirement of masks and social distancing, there will be no card party or rummage sale this year. Please hold your rummage items for spring as we have no storage area available at the church. We do have several projects that will be discussed in more detail at our usual meeting scheduled for September 17 at 10:30 AM in the Parish Hall.

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