

CHRIST CHURCH CHRONICLE

Produced by the congregation of Christ Church Episcopal in Sheridan, MT

November 7, 2021

The Benedictine Way of Prayer

Deacon Steve DeHart



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"First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection . . . Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: *'If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts'* ". (Psalm 94:8).
—Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue 4-10

St. Benedict doesn't say much about prayer methodology in the Rule. Keep your prayers simple and to the point, he says. If you want to pray, well then, pray.

The Benedictine Way believes that spirituality without a prayer life is no spirituality at all, and it will not last beyond the first defeats. Prayer is an opening of the self so that the Word of God can break in and make us new. Prayer un.masks. Prayer converts. Prayer impels. Prayer sustains us on the way. Benedictines pray for the grace it will take to continue what they would otherwise quit.

I like to think that my failure to pray is a result of my busyness. I'd rather not consider it an indication of a hard heart, a heart refusing to hear God, refusing to hear others. But I can't escape the fact that my heart is callused. I know it when I cross the street because of my reaction (or lack of one) to the people of homeless humanity cluttering the sidewalk. I know I am callused when I look away from a kid with drug-dazed eyes or I resist speaking to the person in the wheelchair.

Every time I refuse to hear, I grow less capable of hearing. That's how the calluses got there. It probably started before I knew what was happening.

Failure to pray will harden us and deafen us to God's presence. Prayer trains us to hear God's presence in our world, in all the people who silently walk into the rooms of our lives, and in all the words not spoken. Our prayerlessness is not about how busy we are or about our good intentions gone wrong. It is about the state of our callused, hard-of-hearing hearts. The irony is that the thing we are resisting is the only cure for the ailment: prayer.

Simplicity is the antidote to the single thing we seem to blame for our failure to pray: busyness. If prayer is simple, if all we have to do is do it, then we can relax. It can be done in the shower or in the car. It can

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The Benedictine Way of Prayer, cont.

Deacon Steve DeHart

be done alone, or with our families or friends. We can pray and walk, pray and exercise, or we can just sit still, do nothing, and pray. We don't need formulas and methods.

"O God," I said, and that was all. But what are the prayers of the whole universe more than that one cry? It is not what God can give us, but God that we want."

--George MacDonald.

I believe we have an instinct for God. Sensing God's presence comes as naturally to human beings as sensing our presence comes to our children or grandchildren when we silently walk into a room. When our hearts are filled with loving someone, we grow increasingly aware of that person. That is what happens when we pray. We begin to spot God in the busy train of life.

Poetry Corner -

Messenger by Mary Oliver

My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird –
equal seekers of sweetness.
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young and still not half-perfect? Let me
keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.
The phoebe, the delphinium.
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,

Which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart
and these body-clothes,
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,
telling them all, over and over, how it is
that we live forever.

©Mary Oliver



Coming Events

Family Game Night . . . because of the conflict with last Friday of the month with holidays in November and December, Family Game Night will resume in January on last Friday at 5:30.

Christmas Pageant . . . Remember the Children's Christmas Pageant of 2019? We are making plans to present it again this year. It will be on Sunday, December 19. Watch for more details to come.



Children's Chapel

Brianna Harbor

Christ Episcopal Church is happy to announce that the Children's Chapel will begin on the first day of Advent on November 28, 2021. Deacon Steve Dehart, Dorothy Dehart, and Brianna Harbor will lead the children's chapel program. Each week we will dive into the gospel reading for the week in a lesson plan designed for children of every age. This will make learning about the gospel fun and integrative with many activities to do at home.

Blessing of the Animals on St. Francis Day

We celebrated St. Francis Day on October 3 under beautiful sunny skies on a lovely autumn day. It was mostly cats and dogs this year, with the exception of Alice's turtle; who must have been shy, because we didn't get his photo.



Update for the Parish Hall

If you have been in the Parish Hall lately, you can't help but to have noticed its chaotic condition! The demolition is complete, and the contract now signed to begin the repairs. The flooring, cabinets, and countertops will all be replaced, and walls will be repaired and painted. If you want to give input about colors, there will be an opportunity to do that this Tuesday at 10:00 am in the Parish Hall.



Pledge Letters

A letter requesting your annual pledge will be arriving soon in your mail box. We are called to do service and to provide for the spiritual needs of our community, to be a place of welcoming, learning and pre-eminently of worship and prayer.

Please prayerfully consider your pledge for 2022. The Vestry will review the budget and projections in its next meeting and will present the 2022 budget at the Annual Meeting in January.

Blessings for your service and dedication to this parish.

Janis Hansen, Clergy Adam Romkena, Senior Warden



Christ Church Episcopal

304 South Main Street
P.O. Box 152
Sheridan, MT 59749

Telephone
406-842-7713
www.rvec.com
Bible Study
Sundays 9am
Services
Sundays 10am

Janis Hansen, Rector
ubicari@msn.com
home: 406-842-7715
cell: 503-780-5767

Adam Romkema, Senior
Warden
adamromkema@gmail.com
home: 406-842-7603

INVITE people into our midst
INCLUDE people in the life of the church
INFORM people about past events that shape our present,
and current events that shape our future
PROCLAIM the gospel in thought, word and deed
REJOICE in a new life found in Christ Jesus.

Mission Statement

To be formed as the body of Christ, seeking to love and serve one another and those in need.

Vision Statement

To be Christ's continued presence in the Ruby Valley by welcoming those who seek Christ, offering varied forms of services, reflecting our diversity while maintaining our Episcopal identity.

Service Leaders for November and December

Upcoming Service Leaders for November / December

14 Nov: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)
21 Nov: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist) Deacon Steve DeHart, Homilist
28 Nov: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)
5 Dec: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)

Upcoming Lectors for November / December

14 Nov: Laura Cooper
21 Nov: Sandra Baril
28 Nov: Alice Forwood
5 Dec: Dorothy DeHart