

From Our Pastor –February 2018

HIGH TEA AND LENTEN MYSTERIES

“If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found fighting against God.” Acts 5:39

Is it just a coincidence, or an accident of history, or perhaps a vast cosmic conspiracy that Lent this year stretches from Valentine's Day to April Fool's Day? Ash Wednesday is traditionally a day of lamentation when we mark our foreheads with ashes, but this year it is a day for celebrating and exchanging hearts with messages of love. And April Fool's Day is usually a time when we try to trick one another into believing fake news, and then to declare: *April Fools!* But this year we announce the unbelievable news, *Jesus Christ is Risen!* And then have to add, *No, Really! We're not kidding! He really is!*

Therefore, as we share together the adventure of moving from exchanging hearts with one another on Valentine's Day to exchanging hearts with God on Easter, I would like to propose a novel Lenten journey—a kind of mystery trip—in which we reflect upon the conspiracy theories that swirled around the life of Jesus, and which swirl around the influence of Christ in our own time. We will move from the evidence of scripture to the signs in recorded history and on the possible manifestations on the landscape of life today.

The setting too will be different: a high tea at noon each Thursday with a reflective devotional from 12:30 to 1:00 pm in Swain Hall. My approach to the conspiracies will be to borrow the theme of the old *Dragnet* television series—but *the names have been changed to protect the innocent*—and I will add, *and to identify the guilty*. I like that approach because I often find that the names in the Bible—the names of biblical characters—are pseudonyms for us once we understand the passage.

The dates and themes I am proposing are as follows:

- 2/15 *The conspiracy of evil's subtle distortions*
- 2/22 *The conspiracy of silence*
- 3/1 *The conspiracy of moral convenience*
- 3/8 *The conspiracy of public opinion*
- 3/15 *The conspiracy of character flaws*
- 3/22 *The conspiracy of religion and politics*

Then on Palm Sunday we will celebrate the way divine purpose enters our world of false narratives with a narrative of authenticity and truth. On Good Friday, at a 5:00 pm service in the Chapel (after the Good Friday Fish Fry), we will acknowledge the way human actors sometimes dare to believe that they have prevailed over the purposes of God. Easter morning, then, will be the celebration of how God always has the last laugh over all of our evil inclinations while claiming the ultimate victory, life forever more! And that will be a day for exchanging hearts with God.

Come, share high tea and Lenten mystery,

David