



ST. AIDAN'S STAG & STAFF

VOLUME XXIX NUMBER 3

The growing community of St. Aidan's is called to be God's light and loving presence through faith, sacrament, and outreach.



St. Aidan's

March 13, 2023

We will serve **100 to 125** potatoes -- with lots of sour cream, butter, taco sauce, broccoli, ham, taco meat, bacon bits, melted cheese, and sautéed mushrooms!

We need helping hands with the preparation (scrubbing, chopping, and mincing), serving, and clean up.

Sign up in the Narthex to donate food items; make cash donations, or help work in the kitchen to support this ecumenical event.




First Saturdays —
Celebrate St. Pat's early!
**Men's Breakfast
March 2**
Cooking 8am — Eating 8:30am



Together in Lent

- March**
- 6** 6:30 pm Ecumenical Service, Redeemer
 - 13** 5:00-6:15 Potato Bar, **St. Aidan's**
6:30 pm Ecumenical Service, **St. Aidan's**
 - 20** 6:30 pm Ecumenical Service, **St. Aidan's**

HOLY WEEK @ St. Aidan's

- 24** 9:30 am — Palm Sunday
- 28** 6:30 pm — Maundy Thursday Service
Fellowship Supper following the service
- 29** 6:30 pm — Good Friday Service

**31 9:30 am —
Easter Sunday!**



Don't sit on the sidelines...Get involved!

RUMMAGE SALE — April 19—20

UTO INGATHERING — May 12

PLANT SALE — May 18

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR — December 7



From the Priest's Desk

Dear Friends,

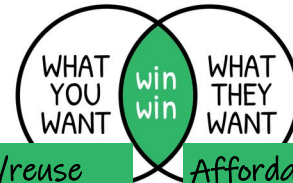
The weather in Wisconsin during the month of March is often quite cold, but a special warmth and hospitality is present among the people of St. Aidan's. On any given Sunday the church buzzes with a particular kind of enthusiasm as people engage with one another. In this Season of Lent, I am very much aware of a particular warmth as the Spirit dwells among us. The Holy Spirit is at work, inviting us to minister in new ways and challenging us to live the words we say in our Baptismal Covenant.

As Christians we are called to live in a covenant relationship with the God of love and with one another. This year, as we walk together in the Sundays of Lent, I fully expect that the Spirit will nudge us to learn more about one another, bring greater understanding and encourage us to grow in our faith. As we worship during our Ecumenical Wednesday evening services with parishioners from St. Kilian Catholic Congregation, Redeemer Lutheran Church, and the First United Methodist Church, I expect that we will be led to see the face of God in our sisters and brothers. Hosting the St. Patrick's Day Potato Bar, before the March 13 Ecumenical Wednesday Service, brings a special blessing to our community and through it, the Spirit moves.

At the close of this month, we observe Holy Week, and I invite you to participate in the Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday services. These gatherings not only mark the progress in our spiritual journey, but these services also draw us closer together as a community of believers. On Easter Sunday, the most important day in the church year, we celebrate our covenant relationship with God and with one another. On this day, we affirm our belief that God loves all people, and we promise to be a welcoming "household of God." Let us live a life of Christian hospitality, as a church community and as individuals in the world!

Esther +

ST. AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



To recycle/reuse
 A cleaner planet
 Less clutter
 A tidy basement
 Responsible
 stewardship
 To help neighbors

Affordable
 Clothes
 Dishes/Decor
 Toys/Games
 Tools
 Furniture
 To reuse/recycle

**Church
 Rummage
 Sale
 April 19—20**



St. Aidan's Creation Care Commission recently sent seven resolutions to the Vestry for approval:

Be it resolved that St. Aidan's

1. investigates grants for inside/outside LED lighting and appliances [Donna Dinco]
2. investigates the feasibility of solar energy [Micki Hoffmann]
3. approves an environmental assessment for the property [Lynn Molenda]
4. replaces toilet flushing mechanisms for water use reduction [Bert Mendoza]
5. initiates environmental programs for youth [Lynn Molenda]
6. investigates providing bird houses for homes and church property [Greta Bemis, others]
7. includes Earth Day/Week/Month in worship opportunities in April [Micki Hoffmann, resources]

Volunteers and ideas are welcome in any of these areas! Contact any CCC member!

Activism is the rent I pay for living on the planet.

-Alice Walker, author

STAG & STAFF



Highlights — St. Aidan's ECW Meeting February 11, 2024

Little Pantry.

Needs:

Volunteer stockers on a rotating schedule .
Additional fundraising ideas

UTO.

Materials/Blue Boxes ordered.
Ingathering: Mother's Day, May 12

Bazaar.

Latest report was proceeds over \$8,000.
2024 Christmas Bazaar – December 7.
More/different crafts needed

Distribution of Funds

Unanimously voted to donate \$10,000 to the church operating and outreach budget.

ECW Outreach approved:

\$250 Episcopal Relief & Development
\$500 Ukraine Relief Fund
\$150 Hartford Hospital Foundation
\$150 Interfaith Caregivers

Important Dates

Rummage Sale - April 19 to 20
UTO Ingathering May 12
Plant Sale - May 18
Christmas Bazaar – December 7

ECW Bylaws/Charter – First Reading

Vote on Bylaws and Charter, September

Election of officers

Micki Hoffmann - President
Ann Marsh Meigs - Vice president
Eileen Schmidt - Secretary
Louise Schrunk - Treasurer

Crafters — START YOUR CRAFTS!

It's not too early to begin those woodworking, metal fabrication, and art projects! St. Aidan's Christmas Bazaar is known for beautiful cookies — BUT crafts bring in almost as much! Get busy before the weather gets even nicer!



Follow us on
facebook

You might know me by sight as Deacon Terry's wife. But I am also a closet technology geek. Terry outed me to Pastor Esther, and she has given me the fancy title of Communications Liaison. Your Facebook administrators have given me access to St. Aidan's page, and I am starting to take on the task of keeping it updated and fresh.

Because Facebook is a PUBLIC medium, we will always be conscious of protecting the dignity and privacy of all of our folks, younger and not so younger. But I believe this is a valuable marketing tool, and want the public to know how much FAITH and FUN go on here!

The *Stag and Staff* newsletter will be a major source of Facebook news. But if you have ideas or events that you would like to promote to the community, please send the details to me, and I will liaise your thoughts into cyberspace. And if you don't already follow our page, please stop by!

<https://www.facebook.com/staidanshartford>

Lorraine Garner

lorainegarner@outlook.com

Building Church Emergency Response Teams



St. Aidan's has resources from a Diocesan grant to provide the training to create and implement an Emergency Action Plan. This plan would provide assurance to parishioners that ministry leaders can navigate emergency situations. Interested members of St. Aidan's did attend the seminar *Building Church Emergency Response Teams* on September 9, 2023. This seminar increased our awareness and helped us to recognize what churches need to provide for a safe worship environment. We have several parishioners certified in CPR/AED and nurses among our congregants; yet, we recognize that we need to have procedures in place to meet emergencies.

We would like to start by (1) gathering names of parishioners who currently are CPR/AED certified and want to be part of the team and (2) provide for new or continued training/certification in CPR/AED, to include First Responder instruction

Sign up in the narthex if you are interested in being part of the St. Aidan's medical response team.



From Donna's Desk —

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend St. Aidan's annual meeting on February 4. The trivia questions and songs were a nice change of pace to listening to reports and updates.

Thank you to **Mother Esther, Deacon Terry and Pastora Loretta** for an engaging agenda.

Thank you to those who have volunteered to serve on the vestry: **Lynn Molenda** was elected to a three year term; **Eric Wetzel** will continue as Junior Warden, and I agreed to extend my term for one year as Senior Warden.

The vestry approved **Mary Moran** to continue as Treasurer and **Gerianne Kelly** as Clerk.

Ron Schnorenberg, Dan Bemis, Mike Weber, Donna Dinco, with alternates **Laura Johnston and Alice Pollock** were elected to represent St. Aidan's at the fall Diocesan convention. The Episcopal Wisconsin Trialogue convention will be held May 4 to make the decision on merging of the three dioceses in Wisconsin; **Eileen Schmidt, Aimee Henning, Bert Mendoza, and Donna Dinco** will represent St. Aidan's.

Since the annual meeting, my thoughts have focused on outreach. I mentioned how we need to be open to better ways to communicate what we do for outreach and how we can create opportunities to be involved in outreach. Beyond that line item in the budget, how do we recognize and **celebrate** what we do – what we **choose** to do that helps others, often referred to as *kindness* or *chesed shel emet*, (translated from the Hebrew, “chesed shel emes” means “charity of truth” or “charity of true loving kindness”), one that is not repaid.

For example, we have individually accepted the challenge of outreach through:

St. Aidan's Little Pantry –this is a continuous outreach to our neighbors and the Hartford Community. To fill the pantry box, an average of \$100 a week is needed in addition to the food and hygiene items that you generously donate. The children's formation groups have filled the box with fleece hats that they made. They have also assembled birthday celebration packages.

Lenten Potato Bar – is truly an outreach of time, talent, and resources to the ecumenical church community who share Lenten services with us. This outreach of hospitality establishes connections among our faith communities.

Online Sunday services – did you know that an average of 25 people view our services each week? We have embraced this challenge to extend services and make connections to those who want or need them, in a most untraditional way.

You continue to *choose* to do things that help others and that helps us better understand our mission “...to be God's light and loving presence through faith, sacrament, and outreach.”

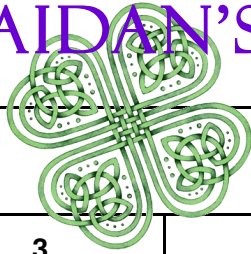
Blessings,
Donna Dinco,
Senior Warden



ST. AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

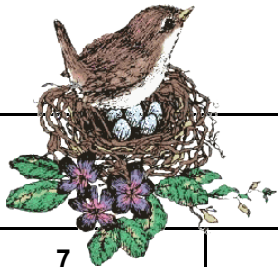
STAG & STAFF

ST. AIDAN'S MINISTRIES SCHEDULE



MARCH 2024

	3	10	17	24	31
Reader	B. Pollock	B. Mendoza	T. Schlaefer	C. Gardner	A. Pollock
Prayers	M. Hoffmann	L. Schrunk	E. Schmidt	B. Pollock	P. Paddon
Acolyte	L. Daley	A. Schrunk	S. Schmidt	J.P. Schrunk	L. Daley
Usher	Schmidts	Pollocks	Webers	Schrunks	R. Schnorenberg
LEM	A. Pollock	M. Hoffmann	B. Schrunk	J. Pierce	M. Weber
Counters	Pierce/A. M-Meigs	Schnorenberg/Gardner	Hoffmann/Moran	Weber/Fairchild	Schnorenberg/ Pierce
Altar	A. Pollock				



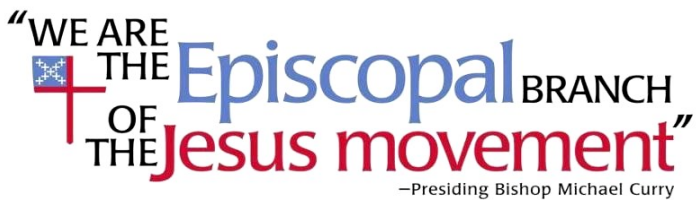
April 2024

	7	14	21	28
Reader	K. Fairchild	D. Beml	L. Molenda	S. King
Prayers	A. Pollock	L. Molenda	K. Fairchild	D. Beml
Acolyte	A. Schrunk	S. Schmidt	J.P. Schrunk	L. Daley
Usher	L. Molenda	Schmidts	Pollocks	Webers
LEM	M. Hoffmann	A. Pollock	B. Schrunk	J. Pierce
Counters	C. Gardner/A .M-Meigs	M. Moran/M. Weber	J. Pierce/K. Fairchild	Schnorenberg/ Hoffmann
Altar	g. Hefti			

If you cannot serve your appointed time, please arrange for a substitute. Thank you.
 Any **permanent** changes to the schedule should be reported to
Gail Hefti at gail.hefti@gmail.com or 920-740-3997.

PARISH EVENTS MARCH — 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Lost an hour of sleep? Don't worry, we have coffee. SPRING FORWARD MAR. 10!</p>					1	2 Men's B'fast 8:30 am
3 Worship — 9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am	4	5	6 St. A. B'fast Main St. Café 7 - 9 am Redeemer 6:30 pm	7 Choir 6:30 pm	8	9 Remember to spring forward!
10 Worship — 9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am	11	12	13 St. A. B'fast Main St. Café 7 - 9 am Potato Bar 5 pm St. Aidan's 6:30 pm	14 Choir 6:30 pm	15	16
 17 Worship — 9:30 am Sunday School 9:30 am Sharing Sunday Stag & Staff articles due	18	19	20 St. A. B'fast Main St. Café 7 - 9 am St. Aidan's 6:30 pm	21 Choir 6:30 pm	22	23
24 Palm Sunday Worship — 9:30 am 31 Easter! Worship — 9:30 am	25	26	27 St. A. B'fast Main St. Café 7 - 9 am	28 Maundy Thursday 6:30 pm Fellowship Dinner to follow	29 Good Friday 6:3-0 pm	30 Community Lunch 11:30 am 1st United Methodist



How to reach us —

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Mary Beth Moran, Treasurer

Vestry Wardens

Donna Dinco , Senior Warden

Eric Wetzel, Junior Warden

Vestry

Laura Johnston

Amanda Mercado

Lynn Molenda

Eileen Schmidt

Vestry Clerk

Gerianne Kelly

Stag and Staff — St. Aidan's Newsletter

Published monthly

Deadline: Third Sunday of the month

Micki Hoffmann, Editor

Contact: mphoffmann70@gmail.com

or 262-673-2903



Prayer Chain

If anyone has a prayer need for someone or something, please call **Alice Pollock** [262-707-3456] or the church office.

Mondays --		
Men's AA	7 - 8 pm	Parish Hall
Tuesdays --		
Women's AA	Noon	Parish Hall
Casa	6 - 7:30 pm	Class 1&2
Casa	6 -- 7:30 pm	Parish Hall
Wednesdays		
Office Open	9am - Noon	
Thursdays		
Casa	6 - 7:30 pm	Class 1&2
Choir	6:30 — 7:30 pm	Nave
Al Anon	7 pm	Parish Hall
Fridays		
Office Open	9 am - Noon	
First Saturdays		
Men B'fast	8 am	Parish Hall
Sundays		
Worship Service	9:30 am	

For information about groups or scheduling the building, contact the Church Office.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 10 Aimee Hennings
- Virginia Petermann
- 11 Thomas Schlaefer
- 13 Geri Kelly
- Louise Schrunk
- 19 Virginia & Bob Petermann
- 20 Dwight Behrendt
- 21 Dave Komp
- Dee Kaker
- 22 Kailie Schellinger
- 25 Judy Pierce
- 26 Michal Daley
- 30 Virginia & Dave Komp
- 31 Mary Moran
- Bob Petermann



Milestones, talents, kindness, inspirational moments!



Leah on flute and Grace [middle] cheering on the Hartford Orioles!!

It's happening in Sunday School!

The children are learning about the sacrament of baptism on the Sundays throughout Lent. Each of them has a different baptismal story and is sharing them in pictures. Please join us by bringing in pictures of any baptism that is important to you. We'll display the picture on the table in the narthex throughout our Lenten season.



Aurelia practicing!



Connie & Ted Del Solar's anniversary is blessed and celebrated. Jack decorated the cake!



The youth of St. Aidan's are continuing their projects celebrating kindness. They've put together a dozen "birthday boxes" for St. Aidan's little pantry — everything that's needed to help make a birthday celebration special.



Ukuleles — always popular!



From the Pastoral Assistant

Last Month I introduced Julian of Norwich as an English mystic, theologian, and recluse who lived in the 14th century along with her famous words --

“All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

It was 1992. I was still in the Roman Catholic Church, attending St. Francis De sales seminary, the Catholic seminary located in St. Francis, WI, studying for the Lay Ministry program alongside deacon candidates when I began to discern my role in the Episcopal church.

I give credit to Julian who first introduced herself to me and the Episcopal church by way of three specific people. One a Franciscan nun, another a woman from my church at the time, and a priest from the order of Julian of Norwich.

It was by this priest’s invitation to a simple meal at their mother house, in DeKoven at that time, that I became immersed in Julian’s spirituality and theology,

“Love is his meaning.”

It was her message of God’s Love that drew me deeper and into a more personal relationship with the God of Love whom I felt my heart longing for.

La Pastora, Loretta Mendoza

Julian's Prayer:

God of thy goodness, give me thyself. For thou art enough to me, and I may ask nothing that is less that may be full worship to thee. And if I ask anything that is less, ever will I be wanting. But only in thee do I have all.



Summer Thoughts

While it has not been a cold and snowy winter (yet!), with the coming of January you may be considering plans for the Summer. Now is the time to be thinking about EpiscoWisco Camp. Huh??? That’s right, it is camp for the three Episcopal Dioceses in Wisconsin. There are opportunities for youth of all ages, with the goals of :1) **Community** - building relationships between each other and with God; 2) **Creation** – being in, honoring and enjoying God’s creation; and 3) **Cloister** – separating intentionally from everyday life to enhance our focus on Community and Creation. All of this plus a lot of fun for campers and staff alike.

There are four sessions:

Senior Camp: Completing grades 9-12

June 9-15

Junior Camp: Completing grades 2-5

June 23-27

Kinder Camp: Ages 4-7 with adult(s)

June 27-29

For more information and to register, visit <https://www.episowisco.camp> - or talk to **Deacon Terry**.

EPISCOWISCO CAMP GOALS

EpiscoWisco Camp's goals can be described with three C's

Community – building relationships between each other and with God

Creation – being in, honoring and enjoying God's creation

Cloister – separating intentionally from everyday life to enhance our focus on Community and Creation





deacon speak:
musings from the left shoulder

The temp one day was about 11 degrees, with a windchill a good bit south of that when I bundled myself up and took the dogs out for a romp to the park and farm fields. Two to three inches of snow from a couple days ago blanketed the grass and fields, but the sun was bright in the southern sky against a brilliant blue backdrop. There wasn't another human around as we walked along the stream and through the woods, with the only sound coming from the dogs as they ran and tussled.

Peace is palpable – “And all shall be well. And all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be exceeding well.”
— **Julian of Norwich**

Those are the kinds of times that I have conversations with God. Of course, when I allow it, God alerts me that “all” currently is not well. One only needs to access any type of media and is immediately barraged with items of ills in the world around us – and every little thing seems to be politicized because our civil leaders seemingly cannot agree on anything except that the “other” is evil... some far away and some very near to us. And you ask, “What can I do about it? I'm only me.”

This is when I love the part of the Lord's Prayer that tells me to get my act in gear. You know, that part that says “... thy kingdom come, thy will be done...” Although not explicitly stated, we need to add “by me” to these phrases. Yes, it is my job, and it is your job to bring God's kingdom. Yes, it is my job and your job to do God's will. This is what we agreed to at our baptisms, and we renew every time we either have a baptism or on Easter – or both!

We all realize, especially in an election year, that there is an immense amount of brokenness and darkness around us and across this earth – God's creation. This is due to humans trying to follow our own wills. (The technical term for this is “sin.”) I know that I am guilty of this, and this is probably true for you as well.



More on the Graying of the Church.
Church Answers. By Thom Rainer

Does this pique your interest? Here is an excerpt from the blog:

Are you willing to go into the community to reach younger people? Many graying church members assume that they don't have the resources or the ability to reach younger people. Or they assume younger people will not come to the church even if they were reached by the older church members. I love to point to a church where graying church ladies took unchurched single moms under their wing. Eventually, those single moms came to church. And the single moms, of course, brought their children into the church.

This link has more ideas.

<https://churchanswers.com/blog/more-on-the-graying-of-the-church-find-ways-for-your-congregation-to-become-younger/>

So first, I need to start with me and you need to start with you – recognize and acknowledge where we try to direct God in our lives instead of following the way of Jesus. The only person you can change in this world is you. But when we do see the ways we are *not* loving God first, and not loving EVERYONE else before ourselves, we can tell God (and/or others) we're sorry and make changes to correct our course. (The technical term for this is “repentance.”)

This season of Lent is an awesome opportunity to assess how we are doing in bringing God's kingdom and doing God's will. Because when we do, one by one, more and more, this world will start to see and know “And all shall be well. And all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be exceeding well.”

Love in Christ - **terry**



Alice's Restaurant

Lent. I am always amazed at the way time passes. Sometimes it drags on forever -- like faculty meetings or waiting for the doctor. Or it's too fast -- like when the grandkids come to visit or when you are immersed in a really good book. Every once in a while, I am surprised by a deadline and have to scramble to get things done, but I got help today from the Sunday School class (THANK YOU) for my Big Lenten Project.

Each year we have a new Easter Candle made from old candles everyone donates, and from them I make a new candle and inscribe names of those we want to remember in prayer. Today the Sunday School kids planned out the colors for me, so I am already one giant step ahead! As a bonus this year the candle will also incorporate beeswax from a friend of the parish, Greg Ledesma. He is a beekeeper and at the end of the honey season he gave me a bucket of wax from the beehives as I wanted to see if I could clean the wax. It cleaned up nicely, and I will add a bit to each of the chosen colors so on Easter that sweet smell in the air may be courtesy of last year's honeybees. You will have to wait until Easter to see the new candle, but I can promise it will be beautiful.



Keeping those hard-working bees in mind, I am sharing a not too sweet recipe from the King Arthur Flour website. It is quick to make and could be dressed up with a bit of fruit or, as Bruce suggests, ice cream.

Honey Cake. 325*

- 1 C. sliced almonds
- 1 1/4 C. whole wheat flour
- 3/4 C. white flour
- 1/2 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t, salt
- 12 T. butter at room temperature
- 1 C. honey
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 C. sour cream or yogurt

Lightly grease a 9" cake pan sprinkling all but 1/4 cup of almonds on the bottom.

Whisk together the dry ingredients.

In another bowl stir together the butter, honey, and eggs. Mix dry and wet together. Add the sour cream and the reserved almonds.

Pour into the prepared pan and bake for 50-55 minutes.

Cool 15 minutes before turning out.

Dust with powdered sugar, or a drizzle of honey.

Alice Pollock



Stump the Deacon

Q: I noticed at the Annual Parish Meeting that you were not voting. Didn't you like the people?

A: You have sharp eyes because I was not voting in any of the ballots. It's definitely not because I didn't like those on the ballot, or the resolution to change the by-laws.

The simple answer is that one needs to be a member of the parish and at least 16 years of age to vote. While I am long past the latter, the former does not apply to me. Deacons are clergy who are members of the diocese at large and are not members of the parishes they are called to serve. My wife, Loraine, is a member of St Aidan's. She votes, and as a family we pledge time, talent, and treasure to St Aidan's.

Although technically I am not a member of the parish, I definitely consider myself to be a member of this faith community.

Deacon Terry



An Old Gaelic Rune

Deep peace of the running wave to you.

Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you.

Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.

Them and us

By Frank G. Honeycutt



When Peter returns from his junket to Joppa in the book of Acts, the elders at First Church in Jerusalem aren't happy. Peter's been

mixing with the wrong kind of people. "Why did you go ... and eat with them?" (11:3).

Peter's mission journey was rather unsettling for those expecting him to behave a certain way—by the book. What Peter saw and did *was not in the book*. Things that were supposed to be kept separate were now milling about together in a large sheet (Acts 10) descending from heaven.

"I understand why you're so upset," Peter must have said. "But I saw this vision three times and each time the Lord's voice told me what to do" (Acts 11:10).

This clearly wasn't in the book. *Time to talk.*

Suppose your pastor sashays into worship one Sunday morning and, instead of using the Bible for the sermon text, describes a dream from the night before. Suppose that dream directly contradicts what you've been taught and brazenly challenges what our Good Book says. You might have a couple questions about your pastor's dream and even his or her sanity.

To understand the ire of these faithful church people, familiarity with the book of Leviticus is helpful—specific dietary "dos and don'ts" reveal the biblical

peculiarity of this bedsheet full of mixed beasts. Leviticus outlines the menu for a God-fearing chef.

Certain things were kosher in the kitchen, but the rock badger, buzzard, little owl, great owl, desert owl, chameleon and gecko, among others, were off limits (Leviticus 11). I'm truly grateful for some of this. The "Thanksgiving Rock Badger" just doesn't have the right ring to it. And ponder the Geico gecko, our diminutive green commercial friend. Who could think about eating that little guy?

According to Scripture, one didn't dare eat (or even touch) certain things. But Peter's vision featured a squawking menagerie that heretofore hadn't hung out together. This large sheet brought together an unmentionable variety. (It dawns on me that this story is completely lost on those who wear white sheets and burn crosses as an act of racial purity and intimidation.)

Tribal suspicions concerning the surprising breadth of God's love appear throughout the Bible. Jonah famously pouts in the book bearing his name because he's sent to the Ninevites, people he deems unworthy of God's care. I'm reminded of a rather stodgy church council member in James Robertson's powerful novel *The Testament of Gideon Mack*, who questions any new mission idea: "By day he is an accountant and by night he adds the saved and subtracts the damned, and always comes out with a minus figure."

Peter and the church in Jerusalem learn in Acts what

I sometimes forget: God doesn't make distinctions based on ethnicity or culture. All people are loved by God. Racial superiority has no place in God's kingdom. This gospel truth has much to say about many issues facing our country today—immigration, war and peace, racial pride. How shall we live together under the "large sheet" of God's love?

•••

Who is this man we're invited to follow? And where is he leading us? If Jesus is *Lord*, his teachings trump our politics, usurp long-cherished convictions about how the world works, and erase regular distinctions based on race and class.

Please don't miss this. The Christians back in Jerusalem were mad. Faithfully following Jesus is going to upset people. In any age, Jesus' gospel will raise the ire of folk who've been used to doing things a certain traditional way. Sometimes it's not the world that needs converting—it's the church.

"The Spirit told me to go with them," Peter said, "and not to make a distinction between them and us" (Acts 11:12).

Them and us.

How do we live out the gospel in a world that thrives on distinction? Our daily struggle with an answer often reveals what it means to be the church. **L**

Frank G. Honeycutt is a writer and ELCA pastor living in Walhalla, S.C. His latest book, *Sunday Comes Every Week: Daily Habits for the Busy Preacher*, will be released this month by Eerdmans.