

Essentials of Faith Tuesday Nights in Lent at St. Luke's Gladstone

The wilderness road of Lent can be a microcosm of our journey through life. How do we navigate life through the tumultuous conflict-riddled times, through the ordinary moments, and through the joy? Which companions might ground us and walk with us toward finding love, joy and peace? Where might we find meaning and purpose which will satisfy our souls? Each year the church calls upon its members to reset their inner lives to bring greater connection with God through the wilderness journey of Lent.

This year you are invited to gather with others in fellowship over a potluck meal, to listen to thought-provoking presentations and to discuss the Essentials of Faith. In six Tuesday evening sessions an outstanding field of speakers will offer thoughts for reflection on what is essential to faith and to life including:

- **The Reverend Dr. Todd Brewer, Assistant Professor of New Testament**, General Theological Seminary, New York City. *Todd joined the faculty of General Seminary in the fall of 2015, having previously served at churches in New Jersey, England, and Pittsburgh. A graduate of Trinity School for Ministry and Durham University, Dr. Brewer seeks to study the texts of the New Testament across a wide range of disciplines. His upcoming book "Hermeneutics and Early Christian Gospels" examines the interpretation of parables in the Gospels of Thomas, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Todd's current research compares canonical and non-canonical gospels on questions of Christology and Jesus' Jewish identity.*
- **The Reverend Canon Dr. Rob Droste, Canon for Congregational Development** in the Diocese of New Jersey. *Rob is a graduate of Porter Guild Episcopal School and the College of Charleston before completing a Master of Divinity at Church Divinity School, Berkely, CA and a Doctor of Ministry at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL. During 14 years in parish ministry, Rob developed his passion for church growth, mission and discipleship at both Trinity Church, San Francisco and All Saints Parish, San Leandro (a San Francisco suburb).*
- **The Reverend Dr. L. Gordon Graham, Henry Luce III Professor of Philosophy and the Arts**, Princeton Theological Seminary. *Gordon's classes include an intensive Anglican Studies course. A graduate of the Universities of St Andrews (MA) and Durham (PhD), he was ordained in the Scottish Episcopal Church and has been licensed in the Diocese of New Jersey since 2006. He currently serves as Priest Associate at All Saints' Episcopal Church, having previously served at St David's, Cranbury. Gordon has published many books including "The Idea of Christian Charity", "Evil and Christian Ethics" and "The Re-enchantment of the World". His other writings include papers on 'Atonement', 'Sin and Salvation', 'Hell' and 'Purgatory'.*
- **Richard Somerset-Ward**. *Richard has been a parishioner at St. Luke's for 15 years. He was born and brought up England, where his father was a cathedral canon. He took bachelor's and master's degrees in Modern History at Cambridge University before joining the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), where he was a member of the foreign staff, eventually becoming Chief of Bureau in the United States. In 1978 he returned to London as Head of Music & Arts Programming for BBC-TV. In 1984 he settled in the United States, first in Manhattan, then in New Jersey, where he has been Senior Fellow of the Benton Foundation and latterly of the Wyncote Foundation. He has written books about opera and theater and is active in public media.*
- **The Reverend Dr. Kent R. Walley**, Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church Gladstone. *Kent earned a Bachelor of General Studies at the University of Michigan, followed by a Master of Divinity at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA and a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA. Before his ordination in 1999, Kent worked as a Campus Staff Member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at several universities in Michigan and at the University of Pittsburgh. He has served in parish ministry for 17 years, beginning at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Hilton Head Island, SC before coming to serve as rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Gladstone in 2008.*

When:

Tuesday Evenings 6:30pm until 8:15pm, at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 182 Main St., Gladstone, NJ.

Course Schedule:

1. Essential Pilgrimage – Rev. Dr. Kent R. Walley, March 7

This introductory session considers the history of the early church and its process of preparing adult converts for baptism and readmitting those who had renounced their faith during the years of persecution. What started as a three year process of catechesis was later shortened to the six weeks of Lent, after which the participants were baptized during the Easter Vigil service. The parallels between the ancient religious practice of pilgrimage, our Lenten Pilgrimage and the Pilgrimage of life will also be considered.

2. Essential Belief – Richard Somerset-Ward, March 14

What must one believe? What does it mean to believe? This is about something different than just reciting the Nicene Creed. What if one has doubts about the Virgin Birth or the Communion of Saints or something else? This session will focus on the essentials of the Christian faith for the individual believer.

3. Essential Books of Anglicanism – Rev. Dr. Todd Brewer, March 21

The Bible and the Book of Common Prayer are two books used by Anglicans every Sunday. They both have a rich heritage. This session will consider these essential texts of Anglicanism and the message they proclaim, week in and week out. What do they say about humanity and the nature of God? And how can we come to appreciate and reclaim them more fully in our lives today?

4. Essentials of the Anglican Way – Rev. Dr. Gordon Graham, March 28

The Episcopal Church is part of the Anglican Communion. But what does it mean to be an Anglican? Many people think that the essentials of Anglicanism lie in a non-dogmatic welcoming inclusivism that builds on an historic via media (middle way) between Protestantism and Catholicism. This is not altogether wrong, but not quite right either. Where does Jesus Christ figure? This session will set out briefly the history of Anglicanism's emergence from England's break with Rome, the composition, centrality and development of the Book of Common Prayer, and the 'receptionist' understanding of Holy Communion articulated by the Anglican theologian Richard Hooker.

5. Essentials of the Spiritual Life – Kent Walley, April 4

What is the spiritual life and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today? Episcopalians are not always comfortable with discussing the Holy Spirit. And yet each Pentecost we remember the Spirit as God's gift to all. This session will focus on the practice of seeking and knowing the Holy Spirit as essential to fully experiencing the blessings of life with Christ.

6. Living the Essentials – Rev. Cn. Rob Droste, April 11

Sometimes, living the life of a disciple of Jesus can seem baffling or overwhelming. It doesn't have to be either! During this session, you'll learn about and experience "everyday discipleship." First, we'll remember why we do these things in the first place. Then you'll see how you're already engaged in everyday discipleship, how you're growing in relationship with God in Christ, and some simple ways that God is inviting you into ever deeper communion with God, one another and the neighbors in your life.

Optional Follow Up

An Opportunity to Renew Your Baptismal Vows – On Saturday Night, April 15th, the Rt. Rev. Chip Stokes will preside at the Great Vigil of Easter, an ancient Easter service of candle light, Scripture readings, Renewal of Baptismal Vows and Eucharist. Confirmation will also take place at that service. This service has served as a time of baptism and renewal for at least 1700 years. And with our bishop presiding this will be a wonderful opportunity to renew our baptismal vows, having considered the essentials of faith in Lent. If you are interested or want more information, please contact Kent Walley, Rector of St. Luke's.