

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

November 18, 2020

Issue 233



Craig's Corner

Stay Out of the Ditch!

One of my near daily routines is to take my Labrador, "Zoe," for a brisk walk around the neighborhood. She gets so excited every time; for her the world is brand new every morning! She weighs almost 90 pounds so there are ground rules. She's not allowed to yank me around as she charges to the next shrub or mailbox. For most of the trek, she's reasonably considerate and obedient. That is, until we get to her favorite spot: the ditch. There's a ditch in the back of Barrios which is full of mud and muck and brambles and weeds and puddles of stagnant water. It's her favorite spot on the planet. And so, for about a 50 yard stretch of this ditch, I totally indulge her. She dives in, and once in, she doesn't respond at all to anything I say. The veneer of dog domestication falls away, and for a few blissful, wild moments she reverts to stone age dog. She sashes through the mud and muck with abandon. God only knows what she smells, but for her, it's like crack cocaine. She laps up the muddy water, and sometimes her fur stands right on end. And I imagine if at that moment I scanned her brain, her most primal, deep brain dog neurons would be lit up like a Christmas tree!

There's a documentary out on Netflix which I think everybody should see. It's called "The Social Dilemma." In a nutshell it describes something like what I've just mentioned above, only on a human scale. Internet technology has utterly transformed our world, and in so many ways has improved and enhanced human wellbeing. However, there's a deep shadow side which is very real, and very destructive. Technology has created something like a digital "ditch," which invites anyone with a smart phone, or tablet, or pc to dive in with a touch of the screen or a click of the mouse. In the documentary, some of the original architects of Google, Facetime, Instagram and Twitter discuss the aggressive and sustained effort to design social media so that it jolts the pleasure centers of the brain. The most seductive aspect of this is when the computer uses algorithms to suggest content you will most likely click on. This is based on their vast information about each user: our likes and dislikes, our political persuasion, what we search for on Google. In an instant, all that data is distilled and the machine predicts what it thinks we want to see. The more visceral response they can evoke, the more likely we are to keep viewing. In other words, the goal is to get us down into the ditch. The deeper they can engage our ego, our vanity, our fears, our lusts, our anger, our need for affirmation, the longer they will keep us glued to the screen. This is not a new phenomenon; it's at the core of advertising. But what is alarming is the efficiency with which information is propagated and tailored to suit our demographic and psychological profile. The geniuses who invented these platforms realize more than most how manipulative and destructive this is, and how addictive. It's telling that none of them allow their young children to use devices!

The vitriol we see in politics and news media is amped up partly because the machines are continuously feeding us whatever will keep the outrage spigot flowing. There are multiple narratives out there about what is true, and the one we are most likely to see on our screen is suggested not because it's more true, or less true, but because the artificial intelligence calculates it's what we're most likely to view. Someone has pointed out that people act according to the idea that is in their head. Also, people naturally assume that whatever is presented to their senses is reality. Notice how many competing narratives are floating around out there. Google and Facebook have no idea which of them are true, and which aren't. The machine only knows how to predict which of them we want to see, and that's what we get. I encourage you to take a look at "The Social Dilemma." And remember, stay out of their ditch!

See you in church,

Craig

Announcements

Church Schedule

November 22, 2020

TEAM 2

Eucharistic Ministers	Sharon Pontiff
Lector	EM
Acolyte	TBA
Ushers	Julio and Rina Medina, Jack and Brenda
Vestry Member on Duty	Sandra Deroche
Altar Guild	Gail Duhe, Debby Fortier
Flower Guild	Carolyn Lirette
Hospitality	Walter and Trish Berry

November 29, 2020

Team 3

Eucharistic Ministers	Alex Ostheimer
Lector	EM
Acolyte	TBA
Ushers	Sharon Pontiff, Keith Hampton
Vestry Member on Duty	Emmalee Hampton
Altar Guild	Sharon Pontiff, Suzanne Alexander
Flower Guild	NO FLOWERS
Hospitality	Linda Greenburg

Parish Prayer List

Margaret, Andr e, Jay, Norma, Sybil, Betty, Lydicia, Donna, Clifford, James, Carol, Karen, Ursula, Chad, Shirley, Jane, and Legion Park School. We give thanks and pray for St. Matthew's Episcopal School, Head of School, Larke Leonard, members of the Board, faculty, staff and students, our Parish Vestry.

November

Happy Birthday

1-Susie Schexnaildre

9-Grace Hensley

9- Donna Knight

10-Brenda Bazet

11-Dana Davis

12-Vivian Boquet

14-Earl Carmichael

17-Sandra Pellegrin

20-Kalli Willett

23-Karen Bowe

25-Kendall Authement

27-Florence Henry

27-Norma Hensley

27-Alice Leonard

29-Gabrielle Authement

Happy Anniversary

5-Herb and Andree Alexander

13-Jay and Kathy Theriot

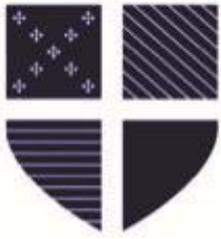
17-Rod and Beulah Rodrigue

21-Irvin and Sandra Pellegrin

24-Rob and Suzanne Alexander

29-Kendall and Heidi Authement

30-Mike and Shanna Himel



SAINT MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

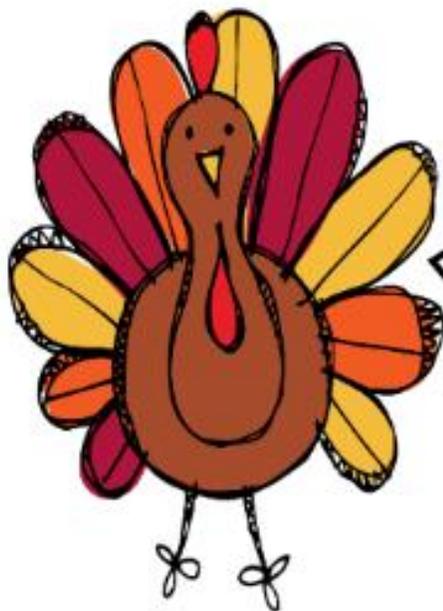


Last week, 7th grade students packed boxes for the Christmas on the River project with the Seamen's Church Institute. Christmas boxes filled with hand-made knits, prayer cards, and peppermints will be delivered to mariners at Enterprise Marine, LeBeouf Brothers Towing, and Tidewater Marine for Christmas. St. Matthew's has partnered with SCI for 10 years with this project.



St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
Youth
Is sponsoring a

Thanksgiving Food Drive



Help us to feed our local families by giving non-perishable food items to donate to the Good Samaritan Food Bank. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

What: Non-Perishable Food Items

Where: SMEC Parish Hall

When: November 15 - November 29, 2020



For more information, contact:
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Youth Christian Formation Director
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courtneycangelosi@gmail.com

GOOD
SAMARITAN
FOOD BANK