

# Trinity Times

A newsletter for the members and friends of Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church  
The Episcopal Church in Athens since 1842  
703 South Main Street (office at 701) Athens, PA 18810  
The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz, Long-Term Supply Priest

Office: Voice and Fax: 570-888-5715  
Parish Administrator, Barbara Cameron Caum: 570-888-8981  
Web site: [www.trinityathens.org](http://www.trinityathens.org) - [information@trinityathens.org](mailto:information@trinityathens.org)  
[Facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens](https://www.facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens)

## Lent - Holy Week - March, 2021

### Rumination: Lent, 2021

The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz

I ignore most social media memes, unless they are cat cartoons. I repost lots of them!

However, there is one on FaceBook that occurs repeatedly. Of course I can't find it right now, but it says something to the effect: "I am proud to be a Christian. I am proud to be an American. Are you brave enough to 'like' this post and share it?" Usually it has a cross and a flag on it.

There's even a variation of it that states "if you don't share this, Jesus will know you didn't".

Ooohhh! "... the goblins will get you, if you don't watch out!" [Little Orphant Annie, James Whitcomb Riley]

Personally, I think "dares" and "threats" are ignorant and grossly inappropriate approaches to evangelism or patriotism. But I suppose that it's an option for those insecure in their own faith or loyalty or simply want to appear as both.

But I digress — it wouldn't be a true rumination if I didn't!

Since it is only a meme, there is no detailed explanation or rationale behind it. I'd be willing to bet that people who post these memes think they are being very clever and that their intention is perfectly clear. However, many memes on social media are reposted so many times. It's so easy to 'click' the 'share' button. (I speak from experience with "cat memes"). In fact, so easy to repost that you never really know where it originated or exactly what the originator was thinking — good or ill.

Still, this particular meme worries me because it seems to be pointing toward a call for Christian Nationalism. I know I just said that this might not have been what the originator was intending, but I would bet that many who reposted it think that it's a call to Christian Nationalism..

Let me forthright: Christian Nationalism is unpatriotic and arises from evil intentions, garnering power from the uninformed and misinformed. Evil: at least in a sense that Christian Nationalism usurps the Constitution and the intentions of the Founding Fathers — not to mention what Jesus might think.

Although some Christian authors claim that the Founding Fathers' morals and ethics were formed by the roots of Christianity, I would point out that not once in the Constitution is mentioned Jesus, or God, or any deity. In fact, the Founding Fathers had a true disdain for "religious tolerance".

Let's not confuse "religious tolerance" with "religious freedom".

Religious Tolerance is when a state-church system (such as 16th England) says you can believe what you want as an individual (i.e. belong to another religion, denomination, sect, etc.) but you have to obey the rules, regulations, and laws that the state-church system has made. Religious freedom is a state system free of religion or a regulation by a religious entity.

The Founding Fathers, specifically Thomas Jefferson (just take a gander at Jefferson's Bible, his personal version of the New Testament, sans the miracles and resurrection), favored the latter: religious freedom. And they were clearly

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concerned about a state-church system of government, and specifically said so.

*“The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; **but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.**” [Article VI, par. 3]*

It is also interesting to note that an oath or affirmation to support the Constitution is required, but it does not mention that a Bible needs to be used for that oath or affirmation.

And just in case that wasn't clear enough, in the very first amendment to the Constitution the Founding Fathers re-enforced their concern:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;” [First Amendment]*

None of this means that a religious person (Christian, Jew, Muslim, *et. al.*) should be

disqualified from holding office or being an American. We do have religious freedom thanks to the Founding Fathers.

Borrowing from a former Ruminator: I recently remembered that at a meeting at the Church of the Redeemer many years ago, two Muslim guests, from Pakistan and Egypt, paid the United States a great compliment. They told us that they greatly admire the religious freedom we enjoy. It was a humbling moment.

How often I take that freedom for granted. How often I am apathetic toward the religious pluralism of this great nation. I've since realized that their tribute also challenged me.

Evangelism is in part the responsibility of every Christian, but not through legislation, force, or coercion. I can respond to the religious meme that this Ruminator began with: I am proud to be a Christian. I am proud to be an American. However, I will always fight Christian Nationalism.

Christian Nationalism, an attempt to impose a cross on the American flag, would be the very thing the Founding Fathers feared.



It took nearly than 12 years, but we have finally ordered and received a plaque for the Advent Wreath which was given in memory of our late rector, Fr. Ned. It will be attached to the base of the stand. The Advent Wreath has been well used, and often photographed. He'd like that.



In January we started receiving Thank You notes and letters from organizations we supported during the year. This one is for your donations to the United Thank Offering Ingathering this past fall. The full 2020 Ingathering will support grants for ministries providing Covid-19 relief.

At the end of 2020 we donated the remainder of our Outreach budget to The Bridge of Penn-York Valley Churches which provides benefits to those in need in our local community - the school districts of Waverly, Sayre and Athens.



# Trinity Episcopal Church - March 2021

Lent  
Holy Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<i>Trinity Cycle of Prayer</i> 3/7 Marcella and Walt Chaykosky 3/14 Kim, Chuck and Logan Cornell. 3/21 Jackie Davis, Becky Fiorello. 3/28 David O'Dell, Brendon Brophy		<i>Kajo Keji:</i> 3/7 St. Peter Leikor Parish. 3/14 Wojira Parish. 3/21 St. John Luku-ra Parish. 3/28 Kajo Keji Christian College & St. James Wudu Parish.		<i>Diocesan Cycle of Prayer</i> 3/7 Epiphany, Glenburn; St. Peter's, Tunkhannock, The Rev. Lou Divis. 3/14 St. Clement's and St. Peter's, Wilkes-Barre. 3/21 St. Gabriel's, Douglassville, The Rev. Andrew VanBuren. 3/28 St. James's, Drifton.		<i>Anglicans Around the World</i> 3/7 The Anglican Church of the Province of the Congo, Archbishop Masimango Katanda. 3/14 The Anglican Church of Chile, Archbishop Tito Savala. 3/21 The Church of England, Archbishop Justin Welby. 3/28 The Church of Hong Kong, Archbishop Andrew Chan.	
	<b>1</b> AA 7:00 pm AA 8:00 pm	<b>2</b>  <i>Katie Moreno</i>	<b>3</b> Intergroup 5:00 pm AA 7:30 pm  <i>Lloyd Mreno</i>	<b>4</b> AA 5:30 and 8:00 pm  <i>Greg Lake</i>	<b>5</b>  <i>Trula Hollywood</i>	<b>6</b>  <i>Evelyn Johnson</i>	
<b>7 Lent 3</b>	<b>8</b> AA 7:00 pm AA 8:00 pm  <i>Bonnie Bailey</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> AA 7:30 pm  <i>Jan Beck, Jack Forbes Gage Streeter</i>	<b>11</b> AA 5:30 and 8:00 pm	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>DST Spring Forward</b>  <i>Keith Hollywood Barbara Caum Jill Komanik</i>	
<b>14 Lent 4</b>	<b>15</b> AA 7:00 pm AA 8:00 pm	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> AA 7:30 pm	<b>18</b> AA 5:30 and 8:00 pm  <i>Judy Phillips</i>	<b>19 St. Joseph</b>	<b>20</b>  <b>First Day of Spring</b>	
<b>21 Lent 5</b> <b>**Vestry Meets**</b>  <i>Rick Bubniak</i>	<b>22</b> AA 7:00 pm AA 8:00 pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> AA 7:30 pm	<b>25 The Annunciation</b> AA 5:30 and 8:00 pm  <i>Jeff Johnson</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	
<b>28 The Sunday of the Passion - Palm Sunday</b>  <i>Mary Beth Paul Becky Fiorello</i>	<b>29</b> Monday in Holy Week AA 7:00 pm AA 8:00 pm  <i>Joe &amp; Laura Cama</i>	<b>30</b> Tuesday in Holy Week	<b>31</b> Wednesday in Holy Week AA 7:30 pm	<b>If we have not returned to in-person worship by Holy Week, we will have resources available to you for this journey. Palms will be placed in front of the church, The Way of the Cross will be available for Good Friday, and on-line worship services will be listed. See the Newsletter for more information. Easter is April 4.</b>			

## March at Trinity



Worship on Sundays in the church is currently suspended due to Covid-19.

**Lenten Bible Study** - Fr. Ben's study on the Book of Mark is well underway. If you don't have email, we've sent out some paper copies and most of you have been emailed. It is also available on our web site at <https://trinityathens.org/bible-study>. There are two weeks available. It's a fascinating overview and your questions are welcome - email Fr. Ben ([blentz69@gmail.com](mailto:blentz69@gmail.com)), call or text (570-423-1858).

**Resources for Holy Week.** As of our publication date, we have heard nothing from the diocese about when we might return to in-person worship. Palm



Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, is March 28th. If we are not able to gather, palms will be available in front of the church along with copies of The Passion, as was done last year. We also have a newly designed booklet, "The Way of the Cross," also known as the Stations of the Cross, that is

on our web site; or, if you don't have online access, contact the office and one will be mailed or delivered to you. It would be best, of course, if we could gather

### The Way of the Cross



worship services as well. Stay tuned.

on Good Friday afternoon and move through the stations on the walls of Trinity, but if we can't, it is a spiritual exercise we can each do on our own.

We'll also add resources we included last year as we get closer: Holy Week at Home and Holy Week Activities for Families.

There will be links for online

**2021 Souper Bowl of Caring**<sup>SM</sup> - *Empty church, but not empty hearts:* once again you came through even though we aren't meeting. This year's donations totaled \$175, your very best ever. We reported our total to the national event and will send the funds to the local food pantry.



**The 159th Annual Meeting**, although brief, was a success. Sincere thanks to the hardy souls who turned out on January 31 to approve the vestry member election: Marny Gerhart will serve an additional year. Vestry meetings are held the third Sunday of the month - your presence and input are always welcome. If you did not receive a copy of the 2020 report, it is available on our website - <https://trinityathens.org/documents-and-media>. Paper copies are also available. Call the church office to request one.

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**March, 2021**

*To seek and serve Christ in all people*