Holy Season of Lent begins
March 1.
By the Rev. David Benedict
Hedges, n/BSG

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which falls this year on March 1. The Ash Wednesday service gives us a simple account of the purposes of Lent:

- to prepare for the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection by a season of penitence and fasting
- to prepare converts to the faith for Holy Baptism
- to reconcile by penitence and forgiveness those who have been separated from the body of the faithful because of notorious sins

We are quite familiar with the first of these purposes – the penitential customs are well known, even if not universally practiced. The second purpose – preparing converts for Baptism – is one the Church is recovering in recent decades, and our Catechumenal program at St. Michael’s is an example of this. The third purpose is fairly rare these days since it is unusual to excommunicate or separate the notoriously sinful. (Most of the time they separate themselves from the church, and it is the church’s task to seek them out!)

But these purposes add up to a final statement of the meaning of Lent, also in the same place in the Ash Wednesday service. By these purposes,

- the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

Even if we do not usually cast out the notoriously sinful and then receive them back into our fellowship, we still need Lent! This is because we still have that continual need for repentance, pardon, and absolution. Every human being has these needs, because every person falls short of what God intends for our lives.

We carry out this process of penitence by the practices of

- examining ourselves, to find our shortcomings and sins
- committing to change our behavior to avoid these sins and deal with our shortcomings
- being steadfast in regular prayer
- fasting and/or self-denial, doing without certain pleasures both as a mark of penitence and as a reminder that we can do without them
- reading and meditating on God’s holy Word, the Bible

Throughout the Season of Lent we will have a variety of opportunities to engage in these practices: the Ash Wednesday Liturgy, the opportunity for private confession, walking the Stations of the Cross, and our at-home commitments of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

I encourage you to take up these practices heartily during this season- a time which has been called “the springtime of the Soul.” Let us prepare with joy for the great feast of Easter, being renewed by prayer, works of mercy, and by the Word and Sacraments of God. †
Taxing the Churches: 7 Myths
By Karen Funk Blocher

A major part of my job as Communications Director at St. Michael’s is to evangelize, not just for St. Michael and All Angels but for the principles embodied in the Gospels and our baptismal covenant. I’ve said before that my own faith is, at best, only half the size of a mustard seed, but I do believe fiercely in what Jesus says in Matthew 25: 34-40:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Unfortunately, many people who proclaim themselves as Christians seem to hold the opposite attitude. As one protester, Alyssa McNerney, recently put it, for too many the attitude is,

For I was hungry and you said, “Drug test those who would ask for food.” I was thirsty and you said, “Oil for us is more important than water for them. Build the pipeline.” I was a stranger and you said, “He could be a terrorist, don’t let him in.” I was sick and you said, “Take away her health insurance.” Truly I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these you did to me.

When people who purport to represent Christianity advocate for greed and xenophobia rather than love and compassion, it hurts the cause of Jesus in the world. It’s no secret that church attendance in this country has fallen over the past several decades. When people see greed, hatred and hypocrisy associated with organized religion, they come to assume that all churches exist to fleece the gullible and hurt the vulnerable. On Facebook, where I hang out, a frequent meme is a demand to tax the churches, ending the tax-exempt status of all religious organizations. This idea is based on a number of myths prevalent in the culture:

Myth #1: Churches are rolling in undeserved wealth. As a bookkeeper for two different churches, I can tell you that the average church does not take in substantially more than it spends. Mainline churches struggle to make payroll, repair and renovate aging buildings, fixtures and equipment, cover utilities, etc., in addition to carrying out such services as counseling, feeding the poor, visiting the sick and imprisoned, etc. Tax the churches like for-profit businesses, and thousands of them will correctly show no “profit” on which to pay taxes. There are of course exceptions, such as prosperity gospel churches that fleece the flock to benefit clergy. But that is not true of 90% or more of churches today. Good luck funding the government from the tiny net income St. Michael’s achieved in 2016. Other churches are even worse off. Each year, some of them close their doors forever.

Many secular nonprofits are struggling, too, but there is no need to blame churches for their troubles. Both are trying to fill increasing public needs with dwindling resources.

Myth #2: Churches want to blur the line between church and state, and turn the United States into a theocracy. Only a minority of churches want to break down the separation of church and state. Unfortunately, they’re the ones who get all the press. St. Michael’s never tells anyone who to vote for, but does speak out about injustice, intolerance, etc.

Myth #3: Churches do nothing to help people outside their walls. Here at St. Michael’s, we struggle every week to fill in gaps in the social safety net. We give out dozens of bags of groceries every week, 500 bag lunches every four weeks, and donate to nonprofits and relief efforts, etc., from donations specified for these purposes. Meanwhile, clergy and
parishioners are doing good in the world in other ways: writing letters and attending demonstrations to support refugees and other immigrants, raising money and finding volunteers to provide health care to displaced Maya in Guatemala, visiting the sick, and speaking out on behalf of welcoming the stranger and feeding the hungry. I’m in the church office paying the bills, supporting local businesses as well as national ones. And once a year we host a bazaar at which other charities raise money for humanitarian aid and sheltering pets and other good causes.

Myth #4: Churches are not like secular nonprofits, and do not deserve the same support. Neither churches nor other nonprofits pay income taxes, and neither tend to accumulate wealth. Like churches, secular nonprofits operate on a system of finances called fund accounting. Like churches, nonprofits have a general fund to cover payroll and operating expenses. Other funds are earmarked for specific programs and purposes, just as St. Michael’s has a special fund for the Guatemala Project, another fund for flowers at the altar, etc. One difference is that secular nonprofits often live or die on their ability to get government and foundation grants. St. Michael’s gets no grants. On the contrary, our Fowler Fund gives “mini-grants” to other nonprofits. ECW/WM and Social Action also make donations to worthy causes.

Myth #5: Unlike secular nonprofits, churches pay no taxes of any kind. Church staff and even clergy are subject to payroll taxes, under a system too complicated to explain here. St. Michael’s also pays sales tax on purchases, like all Arizona churches. If I recall correctly, there’s a property tax component of our copier lease. No, we don’t pay property tax on our 63-year-old building. You got me there. But I’m pretty sure when people say “tax the churches” they mostly mean corporate income tax. Neither churches nor secular nonprofits are subject to income tax, as long as certain rules are followed.

Myth #6: To retain their tax-exempt status, churches shouldn’t be allowed to speak out on any subject that’s remotely political. Churches are free to speak out on religious and moral issues, e.g. citing Biblical passages about caring for the poor and welcoming the stranger (and other topics, of course). Churches are not allowed to support or oppose a particular candidate. Those that do so anyway risk their tax-exempt status (this is also true of nonprofits). There is an effort in some quarters to weaken or abolish this rule, but that would be a mistake.

Myth #7: Money given to a church does not benefit society economically. The “multiplier effect” is the tendency of money to circulate through the economy and be spent over and over, thus increasing GDP and societal wealth. Some of the most efficient spending is done by poor people, who must spend all their income on necessities. This benefits stores, who hire more employees, who can then afford to spend money themselves. Similarly, our parishioners donate cash to our meals programs, starting a cycle of spending that ripples out from there. Volunteers take that money and buy peanut butter, tuna, canned fruit and many other staples, often paying out of pocket to get more food at a good price. They take their purchases to church, put them away and make up food bags. Poor and homeless people come by and get one bag each, probably starting a cycle of spending that ripples out from there. Once a month, parishioners also buy and cook enough eggs to make 500 egg salad sandwiches for Casa Maria, along with 500 lunch meat sandwiches and pieces of fruit. All this takes gas to do, so parishioners spend money on that as well. All of this generates economic activity while benefiting the poor and homeless of Tucson.

Add our ministries to the activities of thousands of other churches across the country, and you find that we can be a real force of good in the world, carrying out the mission that Jesus gave his followers so long ago. And yet, we remain under the radar, unwillingly represented in the culture by the mega churches and by people who use Christianity as a weapon against others. And that is a shame. †
Fasting, Prayer, Almsgiving, Confession
By the Rev. David Benedict Hedges, n/BSG

The traditional disciplines of the season of Lent are fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Lent is also a good time to make your confession. Here are some notes about these practices.

Fasting

Fasting and abstinence are ways of reducing our use of food as a spiritual practice. This is not a means of losing weight or self-improvement, but of drawing closer to God. By voluntarily doing without our favorite foods, or by deliberately doing without some food, we experience the suffering of the hungry, and join our own suffering to that of Jesus on the Cross, who freely chose this ultimate act of suffering. We also are reminded of our dependence on God, and trained in controlling our bodily urges. By practicing self-control through fasting and abstinence, we learn to be in control of ourselves at other times when we are challenged.

Ash Wednesday and the weekdays of Lent and Holy Week (Monday through Saturday) are observed according to the Book of Common Prayer by “special acts of discipline and self-denial.” Traditionally, this refers to abstinence from eating flesh meats, poultry, and meat broths. Given that much seafood is now considered a luxury, it may be advisable to abstain from fish and shellfish as well in keeping with the spirit of the practice.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are also designated as Fast Days. Traditionally, fasting refers to eating only one full meal during the day (at any time), and two smaller meals which do not add up to the quantity of one full meal. These smaller meals should be sufficient to sustain strength, but not sufficient to satisfy hunger.

On Sundays, neither abstinence nor fasting is directed by the Prayer Book, because all Sundays are Major Feasts. Young children, those who do strenuous physical labor, and those who are sick, infirm, or elderly are dispensed from fasting.

Prayer

Saint Michael’s offers many great ways to pray together. The first is Morning Prayer, offered at 7:30 AM Monday through Friday, at 8:15 AM on Saturdays, and at 7:15 AM on Sundays. The second is our Contemplative Prayer Group which meets each Saturday at 9:30 AM in the House of Prayer. The third is our Taizé Service, offered at 6:45 PM on the first and third Tuesdays of each Month. (Lent dates include March 7, March 21, and April 4.) We will also walk the Stations of the Cross each Friday morning at 8:30 AM, after the Low Mass at 8:00.

It is also appropriate during Lent to amplify your habits of private prayer. Be sure to pray daily if you do not; if you pray daily, try praying twice daily, etc. The Parish also has available Lenten devotional booklets from Episcopal Relief and Development.

Almsgiving

Giving to those in need is always appropriate, but especially enjoined upon us during Lent, as a way to remember that for most of us, what we have is an abundance that we are called to share with those in need. You are encouraged to give as you are able to Episcopal Relief and Development, and to our regular Sunday special offerings, or to another worthy charity.

In accordance with many decades’ tradition in the Episcopal Church, the Good Friday Offering will go to the four Anglican dioceses in Jerusalem and the Middle East, to support their ministries of pastoral care, education, and health care.

Confession

The Reconciliation of a Penitent, also known as Confession, will be offered three Saturdays in Lent from 9:00 until 10:00 AM. The dates will be March 11, March 25, and April 8. The confessional is located in the back of the church – just come into the main doors and turn right immediately. Please wait outside the confessional if another penitent is already using it. Br. Dave and the other clergy are also available by appointment to hear your confession. If you need help in preparing, please contact Br. Dave.†
The Tucson Religious Community’s Response to the Trump Executive Orders on Refugees and Immigrants

By Margie King

Brother David and parishioners Anita Rowlands, Jim Steinman, and Margie King represented St. Michael’s at four recent faith-based programs to support immigrants and refugees. We urge others to join us at future events. In the words of Alison Harrington, pastor, Southside Presbyterian Church, “In the midst of the terror and fear that is surging through our nation, our work is more important than ever.”

The New Sanctuary Movement began in 2007 and by now has eighteen local coalitions. The Southern Arizona Sanctuary Coalition started meeting before the inauguration. Jim and Margie joined leaders and members of many Tucson churches, including several other Episcopal ones, to learn how our churches can help defend immigrants under attack. As rising numbers of deportations separate families like never before, and as work place and neighborhood raids escalate, increasing numbers of churches are opening their doors to provide refuge. The movement has now expanded beyond church buildings to include schools, hospitals and other locations listed under the ICE “Sensitive policy.” College campuses are calling on university administrations to create safe spaces on campuses and refuse to collaborate with ICE. Sanctuary cities have declared their continued non-cooperation with immigrant deportation. Rapid response networks bring faith communities to protect people in their homes, should ICE arrive at their door. “Know Your Rights” workshops are being held for immigrants.

Over 700 congregations and 4,000 individuals have taken the Sanctuary Pledge, which reads, “As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the newly elected administration’s policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people.”

St. Michael’s parishioners are invited attend a program at Grace St. Paul Episcopal Church, 2331 E Adams St. on March 22, where Rev. Alison Harrington of Southside Presbyterian Church will present information on sanctuary. (Time TBA.) Sanctuary Coalition meetings are held monthly on Mondays, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM at Southside Presbyterian Church 317 W. 23rd Street. Contact Southside Church for specific dates or Margie (310-903-0280) or Jim (520-603-6885) to learn more.

In response to President Trump’s ban on refugees and others from designated majority Muslim countries, Bishop Kicanas of the Catholic Diocese of Tucson called a meeting of multi-faith leaders. With only 48 hours’ notice, 107 leaders came, representing 57 churches, synagogues and mosques. Seven southern Arizona Episcopal churches and the Campus Episcopal Ministry were represented. Brother David Hedges was ill but Margie and Jim attended. The group spent a considerable amount of time composing a letter opposing the Muslim ban and large-scale immigrant deportations. The letter, which Brother Dave was able to sign electronically, was sent to the White House and to our senators and congresswoman. Media was present and the next day the Arizona Daily Star printed the letter with a story about the meeting. A subsequent multi-faith prayer service was held.

In the last Messenger, I wrote about St. Michael’s participation in Casa Alitas, a shelter for migrant women and children who the Border Patrol releases on condition that they will join their families while awaiting their court date. Anita Rowlands and I have been providing direct services to families, and Boy Scout Drew Weesner continues to plan his backyard project. Since the inauguration of President Trump, there has been a drastic drop of people who surrender themselves at the Arizona-Mexican border.

With the decrease in women and children needing shelter at Casa Alitas and the Methodist Church’s shelters, volunteers are turning to other immigrant-support tasks. The primary focus at this time is phoning the hundreds of women who have stayed at these shelters over the last three years to advise them of their rights under the U.S Constitution. Spanish speakers are needed to help make these phone calls. (Drew’s backyard improvement project will be needed regardless of future immigration patterns. If not housing Central American children, Alitas will revert to its former mission of providing shelter to other kids in need.)

Last Fall’s Diocesan Convention passed Resolution #2016-5, which resolves that Episcopal and Evangelical Lutheran churches throughout southern Arizona form a support system for ministries along the Arizona/Sonora corridor. The
purpose of this ministry, which is called “Cruzando Fronteras” or “Crossing Borders,” is to be a “networking and connecting body of the church that works... to identify, inform, integrate and inspire partnerships and friendships in the Name of Jesus our Liberator, y Cristo de todas Fronteras (Christ of all borders).” The five-point ministries include humanitarian advocacy and expanded church relationships with our counterparts in Mexico, Latin America and globally. Our plan for the immediate future is to meet with representatives of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to discuss our concerns about the recent executive order and ICE memo on deportations. Brother David and I have each attended this bi-monthly gathering and plan to host an upcoming meeting.

St. Michael’s parishioners are invited to study and sign the sanctuary pledge (http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/sign-the-pledge.html), attend meetings of the Sanctuary Coalition or Cruzando Fronteras, and distribute the multi-faith statement. We welcome your questions and appreciate your prayers. †

**Southern Arizona Multifaith Religious Leaders’ Statement**  
**January 31, 2017**

Southern Arizona prides itself in being an immigrant, refugee friendly region.

We, the multi-faith religious leaders of Southern Arizona, express our wholehearted affirmation and support of those in our community who have fled violence and turmoil in their home countries and who have found their new home in Southern Arizona. We welcome them and cherish the gifts refugees and immigrants bring to our country.

As people from many faith traditions, many of whom have experienced persecution and prejudice in their histories, we affirm our solidarity with our Muslim neighbors and friends. We stand with them now in the face of religious discrimination and hate crimes directed toward individuals or communities, and we defend their civil liberties.

While we fully understand the need for security protocols and proper vetting procedures of immigrants and refugees, we repudiate the current administration’s executive orders regarding asylum seekers, the border wall, the ban on the admission of any refugee for a period of time, as well as the ban on admitting all immigrants and non-immigrants from seven countries. This order applies to Syrian refugees, perhaps the most vulnerable. These orders are not in keeping with the values and moral fabric of our nation.

We call upon the President to rescind these orders and to take the lead in introducing a comprehensive immigration policy reform that would better meet the needs of our nation. We also call for the continued reception of properly vetted refugees as is our responsibility as a nation of compassion that has benefited significantly from the contributions of refugees and immigrants.

In a climate of heightened anxiety, we call upon our neighbors and friends to reach beyond our fear and division to find common ground in welcoming the stranger and in fostering peace with love. †

**Social Action Committee: Charity and Justice**  
**By Anita Rowlands**

The people of St Michael’s have always demonstrated strong support for programs that feed the hungry among us. We give warm clothes and blankets to those who need them, and provide service in many ways to those in our local community, across the border in Nogales, and as far away as Guatemala. By our generous charity, we respond with compassion to the exhortation of Jesus to “do unto these, the least of my brethren.”

Charity is a compassionate response to human need. Justice, on the other hand, looks beyond this human need to ask “why?” and “how?” Why, in a wealthy society, are there so many who need food and shelter? Why does greed so often prevail over the common good? How can we promote social justice?

Justice addresses the root causes that lead to “hunger, fear, injustice and oppression” among people. The St Michael’s Social Action Committee is considering ways to advocate for social justice. One of these was an Advocacy Table staffed by committee members at all morning services on Sunday, February 12, with information and resources including policy statements from the Episcopal Public Policy Network, information about how to contact your government representatives to make your views known, information about the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, the Tucson Peace Fair, and others.

*Charity is no substitute for justice withheld.* —St. Augustine of Hippo

Stay tuned for more information on how to become involved in ongoing and future efforts! †
St. Michael’s Guatemala Project –
CALL for 2017 SUMMER TEAMS
2.5 to 6 week options, June and July, 2017
Initial Meeting – All Welcome
Sat. Mar. 4, 10 a.m. - noon
Integrated Learning Center – UA Mall, sunken courtyard
(S. of Cherry Ave, N. of library – nearby parking in Cherry Ave. garage)

Interested in volunteering in rural Guatemala this summer? Or just want to learn how this collaboration with rural Maya works? Please join us. Bring your questions.

University of Arizona students in Latin American Studies, Public Health, American Indian Studies, Nursing, and Medicine are especially encouraged to participate.

Generalists most welcome, useful and needed.
We anticipate two to three small teams, active in June and July. All participants self-fund.

Later applications reviewed, contingent upon space, until April 21.

St. Michael’s Guatemala Project is a non-sectarian informal partnership with the Maya of the CPR-Sierra [Communities of Population in Resistance of the Sierra], who became refugees in their own country as they fled massacres during Guatemala’s 36-year internal conflict. It builds upon a relationship begun in 1993, during the war years.

Partnership areas include community health and health education, advocacy, arts and culture, mutual learning, and commitment to indigenous self-determination. Presently the Project provides economic aid for up to 30 health workers, funds for emergency travel for patients who cannot be treated in their home communities, and support for other health needs.

Information, applications, needs list: www.cprguatemalaproject.org.
Or contact Coordinator Ila Abernathy, (520) 623-3063, ilaa@mindspring.com.
St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, 602 N. Wilmot Road, Tucson, AZ 85711.

Photos: Chico checks Doña Juana’s ears, using an otoscope donated by the Project (2016). UA Medical Student Danielle applies fluoride treatment to school children.
The Messenger
St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church
602 N. Wilmot Road
Tucson AZ 85711

**SUNDAY SERVICES**

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<tr>
<td>7:45 AM</td>
<td>Mass with Homily</td>
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<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Family Mass</td>
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<td>10:15 AM</td>
<td>High Mass with Sermon</td>
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<td>12:30 PM</td>
<td>Misa en Español</td>
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<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td>Mass with Homily</td>
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**WEEKDAY SERVICES**

- **Tuesday**: 8:10 AM Lower School Mass
- **Wednesday**: 12:10 PM Healing Mass with laying on of hands
- **Thursday**: 9:40 AM Upper School Mass
- **Saturday**: 8:30 AM Low Mass
- **Friday**: 8:00 AM Low Mass (Rite One)

**MORNING PRAYER**

- 7:15 AM Sunday
- 7:30 AM Monday through Friday
- 8:15 AM Saturday

**OFFICE HOURS**

Monday - Thursday 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Friday 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

**Clergy**

- The Rev. David Benedict Hedges
  - Rector
- The Rev. Clare Yarborough
- The Rev. Jorge Sotelo
- The Rev. Peter Cheney
- The Rev. Jeffrey Reed
- Deacon Michael Meyers,
- Deacon Tom Kinman
- Assisting Clergy

**Staff**

- Margaret Delk Moore,
  - Head of School
- Nancy Vernon,
  - Parish Secretary
- Douglas Leightenheimer,
  - Music Director and Organist
- Karen Funk Blocher,
  - Bookkeeper and Communications Director