

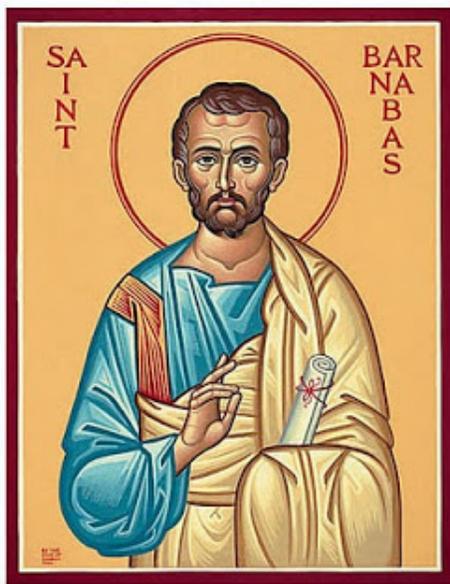
The Encourager

The Mission of St. Barnabas Church is to live and spread the Gospel of Christ as disciples making disciples.

Saint Barnabas Church
3257 Post Rd., Warwick, Rhode Island 02886
www.stbarnabaswarwick.org

401-737-4141

July 2020



Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.
Matthew 5:38-41

Most people don't like this passage of Scripture. In my opinion, that is because we don't understand the power that Christ present gives us in these wise words. Originally, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," was a form of justice. It prescribed that the retaliation to a crime cannot be worse than the crime itself. Therefore, the punishment for stealing wasn't death, it would be repayment. If a person couldn't repay, they would, instead of death, chop off the hand that stole. It was a form of restitution instead of retaliation.

Top dig into this, I'd like to share a quote attributed to Gandhi which says, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." Now, Gandhi often quoted the words of Jesus, and I believe this sentiment comes directly from Matthew 5. You see, Jesus is giving us another option besides retaliation and restitution. What Christ describes turns the power structures of the world completely upside down.

"If someone slaps you on the right cheek," is a backhand like a master to a slave. It declares a position of power to remind someone that they are lesser. To "offer the other cheek" makes an incredible statement of equality. It says, "If you are going to hit me, you will hit me as an equal, not as someone who is beneath you."

Likewise, Jesus teaches, "if someone wants your coat, give them your cloak as well." In ancient times, Roman soldiers would pretty much take whatever they wanted from non-Roman citizens. It was a form of dominance. Sure, you can demand my coat, that's the way terrible power structures operate in this broken world, but if I give you my cloak, then I am actually the powerful one in the scenario, not you! I retain power over my things by giving them away instead of letting you take them.

Similarly, soldiers would often force someone into service to walk for one mile, just think of Simon the Cyrene who was forced to help carry the cross of Jesus. To go even farther than the mile that was demanded boldly declares that I have the authority on where I walk and who I serve. It undermines oppression by declaring, "You may think you are forcing me to walk, but I am doing it willful because you have no real power over me. I serve God alone, not your corrupt system." To be very direct, this was the theology that underpinned the passive resistance of nonviolent opposition to authority by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In my opinion, Dr. King and Gandhi, both, were taking the wisdom of Christ and implementing it into real action to change the world for the better. This world will never improve if we continue to operate from a position of power demanding retribution or retaliation. However, this world will change for the better when we choose deliberate acts of love in the face of struggle.

This is the example of the Savior we strive to follow, undermining abusive power by passive resistance through self-sacrificing actions of love. The essential truth of the Gospel, as I understand it, is to love one another. That's it! Everything we do, as followers of Christ, is motivated by love and enacted through love. As Christians, we are not to choose a side and join the fight; we are actually called to undermine all power struggles by choosing a path of excessive love.

I trust that your mind is already beginning to contemplate how this applies to today's broken and corrupt world. I encourage you to take time to really consider this. In my opinion, Christ is giving us a powerful alternative to retribution and retaliation, showing us how to improve our world through deliberate actions of abundant love.

As we are working on our plan to regather as a church, we are carefully following the direction of our bishop. First, I deeply appreciate that so many of you filled out the survey about reopening our church. Your input is guiding us as we make decisions for our regathering. This is where we are at right now. In an empty church, we will continue to offer the 10:00 am service on Facebook. And, for at least the month of July, starting July 5th, we will gather for Morning Prayer in the park, Rite I at 8:00 am and Rite II at 9:00 am. If there is good attendance, we may add an 11:00 worship time as well. Here's the thing: You will need to sign up in advance, each week, for one of these times because numbers will be limited. The sign-up sheet will be made available online, or you will be able to call the office and Robin will add your name. Also, the expectation, as seen in the Covenant for Regathering from the Diocese, is that everyone wears a mask and maintains social distance, at least for now.

Is this overly cautious? Yes it is! We are being overly cautious. But, the reason we are being so careful is because we are motivated by excessive love for each and every one of you. That is why we are slow to get into the building, and why we are slow to share Holy Communion. Obviously, our ultimate goal is to gather in our beautiful space for Eucharist, but not quite yet. The truth is: We will worship together in heaven for all of eternity, so we can wait a little while to get what we want on earth because no one should be afraid to come to church. This is one of the safest places in the world. And, no one should feel fear when receiving the Bread and Wine of the Blessed Sacrament. In church, we should only know the excessive love of God.

By being overly careful, we are demonstrating this kind of over-the-top kind of love. By asking you to follow these guidelines, it is a plea for everyone to participate in the infinite love of God.

There is a sense, as I see it, that by being overly careful as we gather, we are offering the other cheek, giving the extra coat, and walking the extra mile to make it clear that we are not bound to the power of anything on earth. No person has authority over us. No virus has dominion. We are passively resisting oppression because we are not looking for restitution or retaliation. We strive, instead, to embody the excessive love that our God has for us by loving one another excessively. Love is the only thing that can truly change this world for the better, so please join me in being overly cautious as, together; we undermine all evil with the infinite power of love.

Faithfully,
Fr. Scott Lee

Episcopal Diocese Covenant for Regathering

I promise, to the best of my ability with God's help, to abide by the guidelines of the Diocese of Rhode Island for participation in church as we regather during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In faithfulness to the Baptismal Covenant (BCP p. 304-305), I will strive to:

Love my neighbor as myself, I will...

- Wear a mask or scarf over my nose and mouth at all times in church buildings, except momentarily to receive the sacrament or lead worship by an assigned speaking part, and follow public health guidelines for hand sanitizing and disinfecting.
- Only attend worship if I am non-symptomatic for the COVID-19 virus or any other transmittable disease that could compromise the health of another person also attending.
- Abstain from attending if doing so would put me at greater risk due to my own health status.

Respect the dignity of every human being, I will...

- Make no physical contact with people beyond the members of my own household.
- Maintain a six foot or more distance from other members of the congregation.
- Respect any requests for distance, masking, cleaning, and disinfecting to ensure the safety and comfort level of others.

Seek and serve Christ in all people...

- Support the decisions of my diocesan and congregational leaders.
- Stay connected with others in my community by telephone, video chat, mail, or other means.

This is our expectation for all those who wish to worship with us in person. By participating in our worship, you assume responsibility for following the above, and acknowledge the risks of participation in an in-person gathering.

Dear Parish Friends

I hope you are all still well and observing the ongoing coronavirus precautions to stay safe and healthy. Because we have not been able to hold our Sunday services our normal weekly offering collections of your pledges and other gifts have basically stopped, so we asked everyone, who is able, to mail their offerings to the parish office.

I am happy to report that we had very generous responses to this request, and we are asking that you all continue this practice, as you are able, while this shutdown continues.

We understand that many of you may have been impacted by job reductions and layoffs due to the coronavirus crisis, so if you are in that situation, please do not worry about trying to pay your pledge right now. The parish does have a small fund of money, known as the Discretionary Fund that is to be used to assist those in financial need. You may contact Fr. Scott if you need assistance from this fund. As always, please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or concerns you may have.

Faithfully, Stan Schofield – Parish Treasurer

Office Closed in celebration of the 4th of July



The parish office will be closed on Friday July 3rd in observance of Independence Day. Stay safe!
Normal office hours are 9am – noon, Monday through Friday.

Happy Birthday



We would like to wish those celebrating birthdays in the month of July a Happy Birthday!

Alexandra Hinger
Ariana Beauregard
Beth Marsh
Beth Nelson
Bethany Rogers
Breanna Buker
Carolyn Fielder
Haylee Clukey
Jean Robinson
Jerome Loftus
Joseph Gauthier
Sheila Laurenza
The Rev. Peter Michaelson

Christina Tyson
Ashley Rodrigues
William Spearman
Mary Jo Berman
Lee Gilbert
Peter Buckley
Josh Faiola
Monette Hinger
Isabella Meyer
Valerie Dryer
Stan Schofield
Sandra Hartley
Madelynn Iozzi

Prayer Chain



Our prayer chain is organized to meet the prayer needs of our parish family as well as those in our community of family, friends and neighbors. It functions as a rapid response to anyone in need of prayers. Because prayer requests are communicated by e-mail, the Prayer Chain is available 24/7. The coordinator keeps a list of voluntary prayer intercessors, and we always welcome new volunteers! Please contact Robin Beckwith our prayer chain coordinator if you have a prayer request or would like to volunteer. You may speak with her after Sunday services or contact Robin Meunier in the office at 737-4141 or by email at parishadmin@stbarnabaswarwick.org for Robin Beckwith's contact information or to simply take your prayer request.

Prayer is the lantern that will light our way through the darkness.

Education for Ministry (EfM)

EFM is a 4-year program of theological study out of Sewanee - The University of the South. St. Mark's has a class that meets on Mondays, September-May from 6:30-8:30 pm. Areas of study are Old and New Testament (years 1 and 2), church history (year 3) and theology (year 4). If you are curious about this program, or ready to sign up, there is space for you! We begin again the Monday after Labor Day. More information can be found here: <http://efm.sewanee.edu/> or you can call or email Mother Susan Wrathall at St. Mark's, Warwick.

HATS for MOLO

Thank you to all of the knitters who used their creative skills to make beautiful hats for the children in the orphanage in Molo, Kenya. The goal was to provide 100 hats, and to my surprise, 166 hats were delivered to my friend, Cindy, who will be part of the mission group travelling to Molo this summer. She assured me that our colorful handiwork filled quite a need since it is winter this time of year. Again, thank you for being a part of this mission project. Even when we are temporarily apart, we can do great things! Sincerely, Joan