

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
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We are in such a strange place as a country, as an American people. We are in need of great shepherding. We are in need of great healing and reconciliation.

The Affordable Care Act happens.

The American Health Care Act doesn't happen

The Single Payer System – That is what I hear ought to happen from many physicians

Here is the plan. God wants to heal and love and care for. He wants *us* to heal and love and care for each other. And he wants us to do it well, to do our absolute best. I do not think we are there yet. God is trying so hard to inspire, to inspire all of us, to care for everyone, not just the rich, not just the ones who can afford it. That is how God works. He uses us to reach out to the world. Treat all people like they are our own children, our own family.

Pray that the democrats and the republicans and the independents, and physicians and health care workers, pray that we all can work together so that people are healed and loved and cared for...better. Speak up. It is up to you and me, and everybody.

There are clearly no easy answers. It is debilitating our country to run our current health care system that tries to care for all, forcing everyone into something, and yet, with increasing costs and mismanagement. And yet, it is a better step than before...I think.

Did you know that St. Mark's Church pays \$26,000.00 per year for the Veits to have health insurance. Then we, the Veits, pay \$3,000.00 or more per year out of our own pocket for that same health care coverage. And we have a stack of paid bills and receipts and letters that are about four inches thick from health insurance, just for 2016 alone. And we haven't been that sick.

At least we have it though, right? What about those who don't? They either get penalized and then they go to the emergency room where they will be treated for free...not really free. Except for my friend who had a life-threatening disease. They treated him initially because he went to the E.R. But then he couldn't have the millions of dollars of treatments that quite often heal a person with that disease. He could have had them if he had had health insurance. Eventually, he died from from the illness a few years ago. I do not think we did our best for him.

We have to make it better, and better for all, not just some. Why? Because God, Jesus, the movements of the Holy Spirit, because restoration and healing are for all.

God will deliver. We will deliver. I have faith. And in the end, we will come together as a people to care for each other better.

For most all people, we focus on ourselves first: Mazlow's hierarchy of needs - Food, water, safety, etc. Once they are fulfilled, then we focus *more* on ourselves, buying video games and

cars and stuff. And we buy a lot of stuff. We buy dolls, and more dolls, and shoes, and we go to the movies and buy popcorn and coke and candy for about \$40. Then we travel and spend lots of money. At least I do. Maybe you are all different. And then, maybe, just, maybe, we give a little extra to someone in need or a charity or to our church. We give a dollar or a few dollars or even thousands of dollars, but still a very small percentage of our total assets. And we, many of us, that is, give a little of our time.

To be honest, I do not know how God is going to solve the world. Of course, he began with creating all of us in his own image. Then he sent us a savior so that we all could have eternal life. However, what we do not understand is that the eternal life can begin now. Eternal life includes all people being healed and loved and cared for according to how they need to be healed and loved and cared for...now. And that includes each of us.

Help, God! And God acts. And God delivers, helping us to see. God inspires us. He shepherds. And he inspires us to shepherd.

What is shepherding, anyway? It is one of the oldest occupations, dating back over five thousand years ago, probably in what is Asia Minor. Sheep were kept for their milk, meat, and especially their wool. The sheep would provide. Interesting, huh? We, humanity, are the sheep! We feed and comfort with what we have. It is up to us. And God is the good shepherd. Sheep need a shepherd. And a good shepherd tends, or takes care of, he watches over and looks after the sheep. A good shepherd herds the sheep. He gathers them and directs them. He feeds the sheep. He guards and protects the sheep.

Interesting. In the Old Testament reading of I Samuel, God inspires Samuel to seek a new king. It is dangerous. If King Saul hears about it, Samuel could be convicted of treason and put to death. But with God, the good shepherd inspiring him, he continues with the mission for which he is called. Then, when he approaches Jesse of Bethlehem to seek a new king, as God had directed him to do, he ends up choosing not the oldest brothers, not the obvious choices, but instead the youngest brother, David, a little shepherd boy. God, through Samuel, chooses a shepherd to lead them.

Remember Moses? His brother Aaron had the leadership skills. He was the good speaker. But God chose Moses. And, of course, there is our king, our savior, Jesus, who shocked everyone. He was a poor refugee, a baby, a nobody in a world of power and politics. And yet, that is who God chose to lead us, to save us. Save us, Jesus. Save us, good shepherd.

We read the 23rd Psalm today. Perhaps one of the most poetic writings of all time. The LORD is my...who? The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He herds. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. God tends and protects. He revives my soul and leads me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Yea, though I walk in this difficult and, at times, excruciating life, I will fear no evil. Why? Because the Lord is shepherding me, shepherding all of us, whether we recognize it or not. Help us Lord. For thou art with us; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort us. And God protects us in the presence of our enemies. And we have been anointed by God, set apart, for the work of the Holy Spirit. We are called to do the work of Jesus in this

world. And we are so blessed. Our cup runs over. It runs over and over and over every day. We are so blessed. And lastly, we affirm that even in the darkest of situations, that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the day of our lives. Why? Because we will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Our shepherd is saying that we need to do better. And our shepherd will help us. Our shepherd will shepherd us, we the sheep, who seem to be, at times, wandering aimlessly, just eating grass, fulfilling Mazlow's hierarchical needs. Now get out and feed others. Give until the giving hurts. Give of your money and your time. Give of your entire being.

"Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light," says the author of Ephesians. "Live as children of light...Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness..." Give, and give in Jesus' name. Receive in Jesus' name.

And in that entire gospel reading that we just heard out of John, that long and detailed gospel reading, never lose sight of one thing. Perhaps it is the most important thing: a miracle happened, a real-life miracle. A man, a human being, just like us, had an ailment and then was healed. He was blind from birth. A man was blind, and Jesus healed him. And everyone argued and argued over what is *not* the main point - who sinned? It is not too different from the arguing that is happening today, certainly within congress, but also throughout the country. Jesus miraculously healed a person who was blind.

Have faith that God will do the same for you. Have faith that God will do the same for the entire world. Now go and be a part of that healing and miraculous process.

Affordable Care Act? Come on. The not-so-Affordable Care Act.
American Health Care Act? Come on.

We can do better. Be faithful, and let's work together...under the tending and herding and feeding and protection of the good shepherd. Go, sheep, go. It's not easy, is it?