

August 2015

Dear St. Luke's Episcopal School Family:

At the heart of our Episcopal Identity is a commitment to inclusion, hospitality, and generosity. Our Episcopal Identity gently rejects a binary theological approach to our world; an approach that divides and excludes others based upon dogma or one's interpretation of Scripture and simplistic "either/ors." Our reluctance to adopt this particular set of beliefs is grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke remember that when Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment of all, he responded instead with two commandments that form an orientation or ethos for a life of Christian discipleship and an Episcopal School.

The first commandment is, of course, the *Shema*: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength." Jesus places God at the center of our being. But then Jesus adds a second commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." He strikingly adds: "There is no other commandment greater than these." Clearly, the teaching of Jesus is not an either/or way of thinking, choosing, and behaving.

Centuries ago, Dorotheus of Gaza described our human situation as a circle. God is at the heart of the circle and every human being created by God is a point on the circumference of that circle. We cannot, we must not choose between loving God with our whole being and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Isn't it true that as we move closer to God, we move closer to others who are being drawn towards the center of the circle by the love of God!

As we move forward into the future, I am mindful of an old African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." If we want to go far, we will go together.

The Rev. Ken Cumbie, Rector
St. Luke's Episcopal Church and School