

## **MCC REFRIGERATOR CARD**

4-26-15

Other Sheep – Learning to Love ALL Pastor Rich

*1<sup>st</sup> John 3:16-24 John 18:14-18*

Other sheep. What did Jesus mean? Good Shepherd is an oxymoron like jumbo shrimp or civil war. To us there is nothing contradictory about that, but in Jesus' day shepherds were looked down upon as dirty people, thieves. So despised were shepherds that under Jewish law of Jesus' time, a shepherd could not be a witness in a trial. In God's flock, there are going to be so many people that you did not expect. Jesus says there are other sheep not of my fold and I must bring them in too. We don't know to whom Jesus was referring – maybe it was Muslims, maybe Buddhists, maybe just everyone, like us, who was not Jewish! There should be no room in our hearts for hating anyone. Elisabeth Kubler Ross said: "People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within." If you are looking at any other group as "other," then you are letting the darkness set in inside of you, instead of letting out the light that is within you. There is a Jewish Talmudic tradition of "Legend of the Just" — "Tzadikim." This is Hebrew for the number 36, so these are 36 humble, righteous ones, also known as "The Concealed Ones." As long as there are these 36 righteous ones upon the earth, God will stay God's hand from punishing the planet for its wickedness and waywardness. The most remarkable thing about these is that they have no inkling that they are "tzadikim." That's why they're known as "The Concealed Ones." They are simply men and women living a simple life transcribed by a love of God so great that it spreads that love everywhere, everyday, every way. Proof positive that you are not one of these righteous ones is if you proclaim your righteousness. From this tradition comes the teaching that every Jew is called to live humble, unobtrusive, dedicated, compassionate lives — to live as if they could be one of the Tzadikim, yet to live without ever professing any special righteousness for oneself. Could you be one of Tzadikim? As Teresa of Avila said 500 years ago: "Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which God looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which God walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which God blesses all the world." It is not enough that we simply remain sheep. WE are called to be shepherds. That means we care about the one sheep that is lost; that we care for and respect ALL sheep, whether or not they are from "our" fold because they are a part of God's fold. There is hope! At MCC QC we embrace a progressive, positive, and practical spirituality. We celebrate the sacred value of all people. We affirm the sacredness of creation, the beauty of diversity, and recognize the divine spark in human beings regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or religious background. Our Holy Communion is a celebration of the unity of all life where everyone is welcome at the table no matter what they believe (or don't understand). MCC QC affirms the omnipresence of God, and therefore sees and celebrates the Holy in all sincere spiritual paths. We celebrate the Holy as well in culture, the arts, the sciences, and in love freely, genuinely expressed. We are culturally Christian and we are spiritually unlimited. Divine Love enfolds all, fills all, and excludes none.