

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



JULY 2008

Summer may be getting a late start in Grand County, but now that it is upon us, most of us find ourselves very busy. And so it is at St. John's. Be sure to mark your calendar for the following activities.

Our very first Independence Day service, "A Celebration of God and Country," will be held on Thursday, July 3rd, at 5:30PM at St. John's. See the Notes About Ministries Page for details about this important new service. And we will of course observe Friday, July 4th, with our entry in the annual Granby Fourth of July parade.

Compline-on-the-Lake is offered Sunday, July 20th, at 5PM.

We will take an introspective look at ourselves as a parish during a series of three Adult Ed presentations after church the Sundays of July 13th, 20th, and 27th. See the Rector's Page for further information.

And these presentations will serve as preparation for an important all parish retreat/workshop on Saturday, August 2nd. The workshop will be facilitated by Lou Blanchard, the diocesan canon missioner for church growth and congregational development. Also join us for a pre-retreat wine, cheese, and chocolate party the night before, Friday the 1st, at 7PM in the parish hall.

A Word from the Rector

We are having an especially busy summer at St. John's, and I want to bring two particularly important events to your attention. For the first, let me draw your attention to the note from our three wardens elsewhere in this newsletter, in which they announce an all-parish meeting on Saturday, August 2. I want to re-enforce and emphasize the importance of this meeting.

It is healthy and even necessary, I would say, for both persons and organizations to occasionally stop to take stock of just where they are and where they are going. And under the leadership of your vestry, this summer is a time for St. John's to undertake this exercise. It will culminate at the August 2 meeting they describe. The agenda for this meeting will include a review our community context—demographics, culture, economics, other churches, etc; planning for growth, our assets, and the development of an action plan. This is a time for serious thinking and serious planning for St. John's future. The purpose of the “dessert reception” Friday evening will be to get acquainted and to exchange “stories” of St. John's. Sometimes the stories we tell about our history can tell us the most about who we are.

So that we are as prepared for this as we can be, our regular summer adult education program will focus on a self-study. For two Sundays, July 13 and 20, we will use several different tools of congregational analysis to think about St. John's, about our culture and personality as a congregation and how we are like and unlike other congregations and churches. (This should be a lot of fun, actually.) And then, following church on the 27th, John and Terry McFee will offer a power point presentation of what they learned from their week spent at a national conference on church growth. We should be well-prepared for Lou's visit the next week. The more people who can attend this and the more participation we get, the more valuable this process will be. Please make every effort to attend.

The second key event is our very first Independence Day service to be held Thursday, July 3, at 5:30PM. This service, based on the format we use for Christmas Lessons and Carols and the Old Testament readings from the Easter Vigil, will consist of patriotic readings, national songs, and prayers for the nation. We are calling it “A Celebration of God and Country.” The service will be fun, informative, inspiring, and interdenominational. Help to support this service by coming and, perhaps, by inviting friends and neighbors. I hope that this service becomes a real St. John's tradition.

See you at both these events, I hope. God bless you all; God bless St. John's; and God bless our nation.

Notes about Ministries

Changing of the Guard

Deacon Diane Bielski is now the new head of our outreach committee. She replaces Ann Wheeler who has served the last two years. (Thank you, Ann, for your good service!) Diane comes to her new task with both a heart for outreach and with extensive experience in other parishes. We all look forward to see what new initiatives will be forthcoming. It is always good to have “new blood” to stretch us in our ministries.

Meet John the Baptist

At our June 29 service we not only celebrated the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, we unveiled and dedicated our beautiful new mosaic of John for the narthex. Be sure to make John’s acquaintance on your next visit to St. John’s. And if you haven’t already done so, please make a donation of up to \$100 to support the costs of commissioning the piece. There is a lot of ferment at St. John’s these days. Check out all the possible initiatives of the next four items.

Calling all women!

It has been a number of years since St. John’s has had a women’s group, and several of our fairer sex are interested in exploring the possibilities of forming one. If you are interested, you are invited to attend a lunch at the home of Florice Lietzke at noon on Friday, July 11. Bring a “topping” for a salad and come to share ideas about what kind of a group would serve us best. Directions? Call Florice at 726-0253.

“Hanging out with God”

That’s how one spiritual director refers to contemplative prayer. Sharry Erzinger, who is new to St. John’s, has many years experience in contemplative prayer and is interested in beginning such a group here. If you would like to explore this powerful and increasingly popular method of spiritual growth, call Sharry at 726-7990.

En garde!

Some of you have expressed an interest in working through a course on women’s self-defense with Amy Zacek-Smith, officer in the Fraser Police Department. If you are interested in this, please call Amy at 887-3823.

A book club for St. John’s?

If you are interested in forming a book club with other parishioners, please call Eleanor Holley at 887-8952.

Sermon of the Month

Sermon preached on Sunday, June 22, 2008, the day on which Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefforts Schori asked all Episcopalians to pray for July's Lambeth Conference.

Most of us are aware, even if only vaguely, of the growing divisions in the greater Anglican Communion between our Episcopal Church and many members of the Anglican Community, primarily from what we know as Third World Nations. Primarily, but not entirely, these divisions are about the appropriate way to include gay and lesbian Christians in the church. And there is also, of course, division within our own Episcopal Church on these questions. Some of our churches and even a diocese or two have or are considering leaving our church to align themselves with African or South American provinces.

This July Anglican bishops from around the world will gather at Lambeth Palace in London, the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury for centuries. We are being asked to hold that conference in our prayers throughout this day, and I urge you to, when you think of it later this day and this evening, to stop to take a moment in prayer, silent or otherwise, for the Archbishop of Canterbury and all those bishops convening at Lambeth next month.

We know that it is in the nature of the divine to be One. Not just the oneness of the Trinity, but the oneness of all be-

lievers. Jesus prays, “. . . so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them, and you in me, that they may become completely one.” The divine pull is always toward unity.

But we also know that it is in the nature of the human to divide. It is human nature that is constantly drawing lines and boundaries to mark distinctions between peoples. I think that is why Jesus says “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Not, of course, that that is Jesus’ desire, but that when presented with God, people will respond differently, believe some things differently, and be unable—because of human nature—to be able to work them out without dividing.

It is in the nature of the human to divide. We see this most dramatically when we look at groups that have splintered off from larger groups. To very high degree, they tend to divide again. Some of those organizations formed by Episcopalians splitting from their home church have split again, this time over women’s ordination. Others, once they learn more about the politics of African nations and churches, are seriously rethinking their commitments to African dioceses. For these parts of the wider church are just as human, after all, as we are. And just as susceptible to the failings of human nature.

So we will pray for Lambeth, for that gathering of all too human bishops representing all too human churches full of all too human human beings. For what shall we pray? For a particular result? No let's not, for that would simply be about pushing our own agendas, about more divisions. Let us rather pray for the whole church and for all bishops that they may lose their lives for Christ's sake. Remember the very end of our Gospel lesson: "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." Losing their lives would mean that they will lose their sense of their own selves and their own agendas being central. To find their own lives would be to pursue their own sense of self, their own sense of being right—and others being wrong. To go down that path is to embrace human nature and to resist the chance to participate in the divine unity.

This is not a unity based upon uniformity or agreement. It would be a unity based upon a desire to embrace the oneness of Christ and with one another despite the disagreements. It would be a unity not based upon being right ("Being right is over-rated."). And it would mean stopping the process of sorting out the good guys from the bad on the basis of what they believe.

For we know that there are people on both sides of our great divide that are pursuing their own agendas. They are pushing themselves and their own beliefs. They are finding their lives and

they will lose their lives in this finding. And we know that are faithful people doing their best on both sides of our divide. They are seeking to lose their lives for Jesus' sake and have come to different positions in their search. They are losing themselves, and in so doing they will find it.

If it's about me and my agenda, then it isn't about the kingdom. And there is no greater work for the kingdom than to overcome divisions of a fallen humanity in favor of a deep union, a unity, a oneness, of all of us with God.

Jesus said he came to set man against father, daughter against mother. And so we are, often. That is the natural outcome of our human agendas. We overcome this by seeking the kingdom, by giving up ourselves. In doing this, we find our truest selves and find that we are one with God and with one another.

Updates from the Church Family

Back in the U.S.A.

Dan and Nancy Clark (and son Andre), whose missionary work among the Arabs of France and North Africa we have supported for many years, are now back in the U.S., where they are undergoing “de-briefing” with the Arab World Missions people in Philadelphia. They will be moving to near Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and settling in to the new life to which God is calling them. Their daughter Aimee will be continuing her schooling in France.

Play ball!

Abe and Harry Lietzke are finishing up their season of little league baseball. Abe is a star catcher and Harry (or “Lefty”) has played several positions in a very successful season. Both made the all-star team. Abe recently “took one for the team” a fastball right on his batting helmet, but popped right up and ran to first. You just can’t keep a good guy down. Probably it’s all that hazardous duty, serving as acolyte that’s developed that toughness.

And the band played on

There was a strong turn out, and a good time had by all, at our recent early summer Music Night at the home of Walter and Loretta McLaughlin. Special thanks to our hosts and also to our expanded band, as Tom Papathakis and Lisa Von der Haar joined regulars Bill Morck and Kay Irvine. Tom and Lisa also taught us a couple of new songs, which will be coming soon to a Sunday morning service near you!

Who was that mystery man?

Our Thursday Bible Study group received a very pleasant surprise last week when Joe Wetherill, back from Oklahoma to summer in Grand Lake, dropped in to visit. Joe, who is now 90, has a lot of trouble getting up for our Sunday services, but it was really good to welcome him to our Bible Study.

A little bit of country

Don and Sally Hicks are, as I write these words, reuniting with extended family in Nashville, where the Grand Ol’ Opry is very much on their schedule of things to do. We’ll have to wait for a report of what else they were able to squeeze in.

No ordinary ordination

As reported last month, our own Catherine Volland will be ordained to the transitional diaconate in the Diocese of Minnesota on Tuesday, July 8. She will be ordained to the priesthood approximately six months later. Please keep her in your prayers.

Have you noticed?

There are several new faces among us these days. Recently joining St. John's are Sharry Erzinger, Lloyd Waldron, Tom Papathakis, Lisa Von der Haar, Beth Collins, and Jim Magill. All of these folks have already dived in to various parish events and ministries, and we are enriched by their presence. If you have not already done so, be sure to seek them out to get to know them.

July 2008

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
		1	2	3	4	5
				5:30 CELEBRATION OF GOD AND COUNTRY	4TH OF JULY PARADE	8AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST				7 PM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT MEETING		8AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM EVENING PRAYER AT CRANMER CHAPEL
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION * 11:30 VESTRY				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION * 5 PM COMPLINE ON THE LAKE				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
27	28	29	30	31		
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		