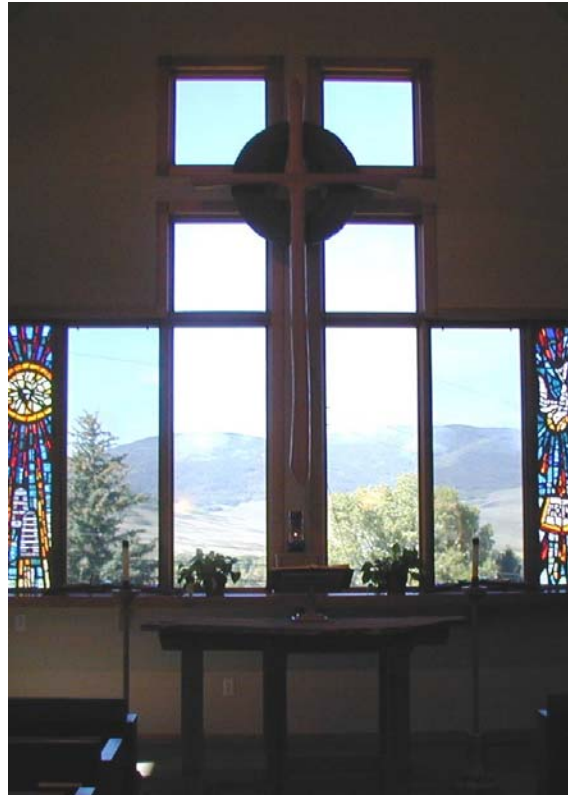


A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



AUGUST 2009

Fr. Spencer returned from sabbatical leave in mid-July to find St. John's just humming along and thriving in all ways thanks to strong clergy leadership from Deacon Diane and strong lay leaders in all aspects of the church's life. We now all look forward to August, autumn, and getting back to normal, whatever normal will look like over the next few months. Thursday afternoon Bible Study begins anew on August 6th, Saturday Eucharists at Cranmer Chapel are back to normal, and the 3PM Friday afternoon Prayer Group continues per usual. The first Sunday of each month children's service is now restored. And our customary late summer adult education sessions start up this month. Note especially our first off-site Sunday worship on August 30.

-Start up of Thursday Bible Study begins 2PM August 6th.

-Please stay after church on the 16th and 23rd for adult education sessions.

-We celebrate Compline on the Lake at 5PM Sunday at the Grand Lake Marina on the 23rd.

-And be sure join us for worship outdoors 9:30 on the 30th at Polhemus Park

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A Word from the Rector

Dear Friends,

Isn't it amazing how quickly three months can go by? I did look up once during my sabbatical and noticed that, goodness, we were already half way through it. One reason it went so quickly is that it was so busy—and of course that was a good thing. Many of you will have heard a fuller report than what follows here, but I do think that I need to review in this space one last time my activities for those, especially, who were unable to attend the Welcome Home potluck on July 19.

Family:

A. I spent two weeks in California visiting with my 87 year old mother and my brother. Karla also visited with her best friend there, while I did some exploring and sightseeing along the central California coast. We continue to be concerned about Mother's decline and her care.

B. Karla and I took in a lot of soccer and softball games, starring—at least in our eyes—our several grandkids. This was a real treat, because I seldom have the chance to do this when I am in the mountains.

C. Karla and I spent a lot of time working on, cleaning, and preparing the Boulder house to go on the market. We hope to sell it and to buy our eventual retirement home.

Travel:

A. On the California trip, I visited Monterey, Carmel, Big Sur, Cambria, San Luis Obispo, Ojai—with a variety of missions, museums, hiking paths, ocean views, etc. I love this part of California.

B. I also spent two weeks in New York City, walking old familiar neighborhoods, seeing Broadway plays, museums, etc. I jogged in Central Park for old time's sake. The park is lovelier than I have ever seen it, and New York in general is in better physical condition than I expected. I also shared meals with several old friends, some from 30 years ago.

Education:

A. The formal part of my educational commitment was to have been an intensive two-week course, Contemporary Spiritual Autobiography, at New York's General Theological Seminary. Unfortunately, the course was canceled for lack of enrollment. But the professor and I agreed that for the price of the tuition of the class, she would meet with me for six one-hour sessions and handle the course as a tutorial. That worked out well logistically (I had no need to take the course for credit), and I was able to get pretty much full value of the course.

B. But more useful for me, actually, was the extensive reading and note taking I took on my own. I read over 25 books in the three month period, about half of which were related to my clerical work. These included a big book on secular culture, a very good book by a leading theologian on salvation, resurrection, and heaven, as well as four different books on building a mission-oriented church, and two books on the priesthood.

Rest: I am not sure if I got as much actual rest as I might have, although just the extended break from the routine of weekly priestly responsibilities was restorative. I did manage a few rounds of golf.

Other: I attended church services at eleven different Episcopal Churches, taking notes on interesting (or sometimes shocking) practices. I got a few interesting ideas which we may try here, and we will have lots to talk about in the Worship Committee. In New York, incidentally, I visited two very famous churches, Trinity Wall Street and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Now that I have shared my experiences in this space, I think I can declare myself officially and wholly “back,” and look forward totally to life at St. John’s. It only remains to say once more that I am deeply grateful to the vestry and people of St. John’s for their generosity in supporting me in this experience. I believe that the time away has been good for both me and St. John’s, and that we are both ready to move ahead even more powerfully and productively than we have before.

God bless,

Fr. Spencer

Notes about Ministries

Your mission, should you choose to accept it!

During the months of June and July several of our St. John's family have been gathering regularly on Saturdays at the Java Lava Café in Granby for Missional Conversations.

These have been rich times of building deeper community as we explore together God's heart for the church to be a sending entity of His love to our world.

We have been reading and discussing a book by Ed Stetzer and Phillip Nation entitled "Compelled by Love," which has taken us on a journey, inviting us to freely ask searching questions of our faith for the sake of loving the church and the world better—and serving God and others out of the depths of His compelling love.

Two more scheduled Conversations are set for August 10 and 24, at 9:30AM, when we plan to complete our reading and choose a new topic/format/book for our further growth in missional living. Please prayerfully join us! [Submitted by Cyndi Karnoscak.]

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Thank you, all of you, who pitched in to make things run smoothly during my sabbatical leave. And special thanks to Deacon Sally and Monica Fuqua for their work preparing bulletins for worship. And to Joan Von der Heiden and those who helped her continue to put out our weekly newsletter. And to Deacon Diane for working with our supply priests each Sunday and for planning and executing our now annual July 4th "God and Country" service. And to Kathe Morck, Senior Warden, for overseeing the business of the church, and Stu Findley, Junior Warden, for arranging for fellowship activities to continue. And to Eric Mowrey and Lorie Wheeler for keeping up with the financials. And to the vestry and those other lay leaders who worked to keep the ministries of St. John's together: worship, outreach, celebration, eco-ministry, off-site ministry, schools ministry, centering prayer, etc. ---Fr. Spencer

A little learning, at least here, is a good thing

At St. John's we offer adult education programs during Advent, during Lent, and at late summer. This summer's offerings will cover four Sundays after church, two in August (the 16th and the 23rd) and two in September after Labor Day (the 13th and the 20th). This year, rather than dealing with one topic over several weeks, Fr. Spencer will offer a smorgasbord, so to speak. The August teaching will be on scripture and homosexuality (a repeat of a teaching done six years ago). The first September teaching will be on the Bible's teaching on heaven and resurrection, and the second will be a guide for laypersons on offering pastoral care. Please try to support our educational programs here.

Mother/daughter/mentor gathering, Friday August 28 from 10-3, at the Gahan's cabin. The program will feature music and several of the teenagers will share about various mission trips they have been on recently. All girls going into the 7th grade and above are invited and encouraged to bring their mothers and/or other female mentors in their lives. Other interested women are also invited. Please bring a finger food or snack to share. If the weather permits and we are able to secure enough boats for the group, a ride around Shadow Mountain Lake will be included. For more information contact, Deb Gahan (303-335-6173) or Melanie Little (970-364-4025).

Sermon of the Month

Sermon delivered Sunday, July 26

I am going to do two things unusual for me in preaching this morning. First, I am going to respond to a newspaper column critical of the Episcopal Church published in the paper this past week. And because I want to make sure I get the precise words I want, I will read from a text for one of the very few times in the seven and one half years I have been at St. John's. I apologize in advance for the length.

I have said that the column is critical of us. I guess you say that comparing us to con men, calling us heretics, and accusing us of denying the teachings of scripture and seeking after the world rather than God—I suppose you could say that that all this is being critical. My favorite: the columnist referred to God as “the God that Episcopalians once claimed to worship.” So, folks, apparently we not only do not worship God, we don't even claim to worship Him anymore.

The column was by the conservative commentator Cal Thomas, a man with whom I seldom agree on politics, but whom I have always respected for bringing his faith to his views. He does not do what so many commentators on both sides do—write and act as if their spiritual commitment had nothing to do with their political and moral views. And that is to be respected.

His comments, of course, are a reaction to our recent General Convention's decision to affirm that gays are eligible for all offices and ministries of the

church and to move toward the development of official “blessings” of same sex unions. Thomas attacks our church's commitment to inclusiveness. He argues that since the word ‘inclusivity’ never occurs in the Bible that it has nothing to do with God or the truths of scripture. This, of course, reflects an extraordinarily narrow way of reading scripture, as if the absence of a modern word for a value settles the matter. A word that *does* occur a lot in scripture is “hospitality,” and I would suggest that there is a very close connection between our attempt to be inclusive and our being hospitable to whomever comes to our church. Thomas argues that inclusivity applies only to those who are “adopted by faith into God's family,” and that exclusivity is appropriate for those who are not of God's family. It is not really clear whether Thomas is trying to say that that gays are not adopted by faith in God's family, and so should be excluded, or whether it is all those who support the inclusion of gays who are not of God's family. But whichever it is, Thomas seems pretty sure of his ability to tell who is and who is not in God's family.

His column is presented in a shorter version than full column length, and I suspect that it may be an edited version of a longer piece, since parts of it seems incoherent. Perhaps an original longer version makes somewhat more sense. But what is actually in print is breathtaking in its combination of ignorance and arrogance.

When I first read this column, I admit that I was angry. Later, the anger—well,

most of it—was replaced by a sadness. It is not of course that the Episcopal Church hasn't made its share of mistakes. We have certainly not always responded wisely in trying to deal with holding a church together with people on both sides of the question of inclusion of homosexuals. We have probably made pretty much all the mistakes out there that were waiting to be made. At various times, we have probably made both the mistake of denying justice to faithful gay Episcopalians *and* the mistake of not adequately understanding and making room for faithful conservatives.

But, you know, we have tried to find a way to be faithful; we have not ignored it or refused to deal with it. Here at St. John's we have faithful people on both sides and in the middle as well. And we are not con artists, but genuine seekers after justice and compassion, when the answers are not clear to us all. And we do not deny the teaching of scripture; rather, we seek a reading that honors not just scripture but also tradition and reason and that we can apply faithfully to a changing world. I do not believe that anyone could come to St. John's and hear Sunday sermon after Sunday sermon, experience our two weekly Bible studies or our adult ed sessions, and seriously believe that we do not honor scripture. To suggest otherwise, I believe, is to confuse "honoring scripture" with "agreeing with me on what scripture means."

Nor are we heretics, any of us, because we believe that church teaching on homosexuality needs to change. Nor are we heretics if we believe it shouldn't be changed. And nor are we heretics if we are honestly torn on the issues and not

sure what to believe. Perhaps most importantly, in the best of our tradition, neither do we insist that whoever does not agree with us is heretical. Church teachings have changed on many issues over the centuries—consider slavery; inclusion of women in clergy and other positions of authority; there are those here who remember not just when women could not be ordained, but when they couldn't even serve on vestry and when girls couldn't serve at table. In retrospect, there is a clear consensus about who was "on the side of the angels" in previous disputes about the standing of blacks or women in society and in our church. Some of us, *not all*, believe that this will also come to be clear in the matter of the standing of gays, but in the meantime, there is no need to indulge in name-calling when we disagree.

But perhaps the worst thing that Cal Thomas wrote about us—and the one I resent the most—is that in taking the position the church has, we "have as much power to illuminate as a burned-out bulb." Think of that. Because of our church's decisions on the inclusion of gays and lesbians, we cannot let the light of the Gospel shine.

Never mind that the Episcopal Church has a great witness to the world in the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund, which has and continues to distribute millions of dollars to alleviate suffering and to further development in the third world, primarily. Never mind all the programs in all the cities and towns of our own country that the church supports to feed, clothe, educate, and empower those in need. No, because of our position on gays, this

witness is nothing; it illuminates nothing.

Never mind that, among many other ministries, the Diocese of Colorado has made and continues to make important contributions to address ignorance and poverty in Haiti, and has established the St. Francis Center to serve the homeless in Denver. No, because of our position on gays, this does not illuminate the Gospel.

Never mind that here in Grand County, St. John's supports humanitarian and mission work in Haiti, Kenya, and Europe. Never mind that we have received the organization of the year award from the Mountain Family Center for our consistent support of their work to deliver services and goods to the poor here. Or that locally our church also supports through volunteer work, donations, and provision of free meeting space, Habitat for Humanity, Grand County Social Services, Alcoholics Anonymous, Heart of the Mountain Hospice, learning disabled children, Parkinson patients support, anti domestic violence groups, and several other organizations and groups that work to build community, health, and well-being in Grand County. Because of our church's position on gays, none of that, of course, is any witness or illumination of the Gospel.

And never mind that weekly here and weekly at Cranmer Chapel, God is worshiped and praised by all who desire to join us, regardless of their theology, politics, or social attitudes or connections. No that is not an illumination of the Gospel either.

This is, of course, Loaves and Fishes Sunday. Our reading is the well-known story of Jesus multiplying the meager supply of bread and fish that one small boy provided so that thousands can be fed. That is our Gospel story, and in this church—as in Episcopal Churches around the state and the nation, this Gospel is read and celebrated and, most importantly it is acted out to illuminate the Gospel in the world. It is acted out in the ingathering—the multiplication if you will—of the food offerings you see at the altar this morning. Whenever we feed the hungry, we honor Christ, and we illuminate his Gospel.

But, never mind that Christ told us to feed the hungry and that St. John's does feed the hungry. Never mind that we have been and continue to be the driving force behind the Cranmer Dinner program which has fed thousands of people over the years throughout every ski season. Never mind that in this ingathering that you see before you here, we multiply the loaves and fishes so that people may be fed in clear obedience to Jesus' teaching and example. Because of the church's position on gays, none of this illuminates the Gospel.

So we insist, in what we offer here today, that "Yes," even "Hell, yes!" we *do* illuminate, we do live out the Gospel message, and we are faithful to the Gospel. And we invite any person skeptical of the faithfulness of our church to place on one side of some imaginary scale of illumination any disagreement about what hospitality and inclusiveness mean, and on the other side the faithful activities of our church—not just outreach, but also pastoral care, worship, teaching, celebrating, and evangelism—and then

tell us that we have no power of illumination.

We are not a perfect church, either nationally or locally. We must constantly challenge ourselves to live more fully into the Gospel. But we will not hide our light under a bushel. Our light shines, it illuminates, for those willing to see.

Updates from the Church Family

Family updates

Getting well soonest

Betty Clark is home from her knee replacement surgery and doing well in therapy—although she will admit to feeling a bit sore. And Carl Wells continue to recover from the infections that hit after his hip replacement four months ago. He is hoping—and expecting—to get home soon. And it was a treat to see Sharry Erzinger’s mother, Helen, in church last Sunday—we had been praying for her recovery for several weeks.

A St. John’s “Welcome!”

Be sure to keep your eye out for several newcomers to St. John’s and welcome John and Margaret Hoehler, Taylor, Tracy, and Abby French, and Tom and Julie Beckwith to the St. John’s family. It is gratifying that St. John’s continues the growth spurt we have seen over the last two years.

Good-bye to a good Joe

Joe Wetherill, resident of Grand Lake and member of St. John’s since the 1950s, has had to say Good-bye to his many friends here. At 92, he needs the extra oxygen that comes from living at sea level, and so he and daughter Patty packed up his things for his last move back to Edmond, Oklahoma, where he has wintered for many years. Betty Cranmer and Fr. Spencer visited last week in order to send him off with the prayers and good wishes of all of us at St. John’s. Joe has made quite a mark on St. John’s and served it in many ways over the years. He sends his love to you all.

A castle violated

Please keep Red and Dorothy Jarrell in your prayers. Their home was recently burglarized and trashed, and although the perpetrators have been apprehended and the stolen property returned, the sense of violation is still real and they are still working to put their home back together.

A bundle of joy

Congratulations to Lorie and Ann Wheeler on the arrival July 15 of their newest grandchild, Lucy Katherine Kelly, checking in at 7 lbs and 13 oz. Mother and child are both doing well, and Lucy now basks in the love of her family, having been accepted even by 13-month-old sister Amelia.

"No one has ever trusted in Yahweh and been put to shame" (Psalm 25:3)

August 2009

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
						1
						5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 10:30 AM VESTRY MEETING				2 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM PRAYER GROUP	5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				10 AM OUTREACH COMMITTEE MTG. * 2 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM PRAYER GROUP	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 5 PM COMPLINE ON GRAND LAKE * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				2 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM PRAYER GROUP	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
30	31					
9:30 AM HOLY EUCARIST POLHEMUS PARK						