

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



NOVEMBER 2010

It may be cloudy and cold outside, as November generally is, but our spirits are high in the glow of our bishop's Halloween Sunday visit. It will be impossible to top that event, so we look forward to a relatively quiet November, resting up for the holiday season.

An adult forum presentation, "Centering Prayer and Contemplative Practice," will be offered by Sharry Erzinger after the Sunday service of November **21st**.

Sunday the **21st** is also ingathering Sunday for this year's pledge drive.

This year's Cranmer Chapel dinner season gets kicked off with our own Thanksgiving Day dinner on Thursday the **25th**.

Finally, the Advent teaching series begins the **28th** following the Sunday service. This year's topic is pastoral care.

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A Word from the Rector

Some months, I confess, I have trouble deciding what to share with you in this newsletter. But not this month. In fact, this issue of a Voice in the Wilderness is a bit late, just so that I would be able to report on Bishop Rob O'Neill's visitation to St. John's on Halloween Sunday, the 31st. (And yes, he was in costume.)

It was such a wonderful Sunday. The bishop was his usual grace-filled, impressive, and accessible self, and he deeply impressed those of our members who had not seen him before. That didn't surprise me in the least. You will want to know that he was also deeply impressed with us! And to be honest, that didn't surprise me in the least, either. In the bishop's words to me later, "Sometimes you just walk into a church and sense that things are really good here." He especially remarked on the tone of the service, the energy, the fine singing, the friendliness, and the beauty of our facilities. And he noticed that after the brunch, people were not eager to leave, preferring to hang out and enjoy each other's company. During his presentation, he thanked St. John's for its generous financial support of the diocese, as well as for its long tradition of being active in the work of the diocese.

The bishop received six persons into the Episcopal Church during the service (see the people's page for that), a sign of St. John's health and vitality. We have so much to celebrate. And just as the bishop thanked St. John's for its faithful support, financial and otherwise, of the diocese, so I thank you for your faithful support of St. John's—financial and otherwise. It takes time, talent, and treasure from all of us to make St. John's the church that it is—and it is now time to segue way to the topic of our stewardship pledge drive this month.

We will have a short, but I hope quite intense, pledge drive this year, with just one Sunday devoted to stewardship before returning pledge cards on

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Sunday, November 21. It will be a little like those public television or radio drives, when they promise to not bug you over a long period of time if listeners will promise to really come through in the shorter time frame. You will get relatively little “badgering” if you promise to come through all the more generously anyway. And we will need this generosity especially in this year. Because of the recession and changes in some of our members’ financial situations, I already know of two significant pledges that will have to be decreased. If you have been relatively untouched by the economic downturn and have the ability to give more, please do try to step up to take up the slack, so that our budget will not have to be trimmed in the coming year.

I will also not distribute the stewardship “leaflets” that most of you have seen pretty regularly over the past few years. (But if you are not so familiar with our financial needs or our approach to meeting them, please let me know, and I will make them available.) It will just be one of my hard-hitting, high pressure, stewardship sermons (just kidding!), a letter of appeal with pledge card enclosed. And, so long as we remember what we have that is so good at St. John’s and that we all want to keep it that way and to pull our fair share, I think that should do it. Don’t you?

I said during my remarks at the brunch that I was proud of our Bishop of Colorado; I am equally proud of you. God bless you all for being the wonderful faith community that you are.

Fr. Spencer

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Notes about Ministries

Right hand man

To make the bishop's visit even more special, he brought along with him the Rev. Canon Carl Andrews, newly appointed Canon to the Ordinary (in church talk) and bishop's right hand man (in real talk). Carl spoke to the congregation afterward about his work in the church, originally in the diocese of Colorado and then for twenty-five years as an Air Force chaplain. All this warmed the heart of all our USAF veterans. It was very good to have the chance to meet Carl.

Immaculate receptions?

The highlight of the bishop's visit was his receiving into the Episcopal Church of six new "official" Episcopalians. Only the bishop can administer this rite, as he laid hands on, praying for and blessing, Sharry Erzinger, Amy Zacek-Smith, Tom Papatkakis and Lisa Von der Haar, and Gary and Kaye Piper. All six of these "newbies" are already deeply involved in the ministries of St. John's, and it was inspiring to see them make this commitment to the Episcopal Church, underscoring the fact that St. John's is alive and growing.

On the mend

We have had a flurry of health and rehabilitation issues lately, and it is great to report that everyone is making good progress toward wholeness. Florice Lletzke reports that her doctor is delighted with the way her kidneys are responding, and if he's happy, we sure are. And Gary Piper (back), Al Clark (knee), and Carl Wells (hip) are all making good progress after successful operations. Gary and Al were singled out for "extra credit" in making it to St. John's for the bishop's visit in their first week back from the hospital. Way to go, guys!

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On the road again

Roxanne Singler is on the road back to Florida for the winter, and we will miss her presence here. Also, we eagerly await the return of Beth Collins and Jim Magill from their visit to Nepal; we are expecting many great stories and pictures from that trip!

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Sermon of the Month

Sermon delivered Sunday, October 24

“Two men went up to pray . . .”

This parable provides an opportunity for us all to check in, so to speak, on our prayer life. Jesus has a lot to say about praying. We have the model he gave us in The Lord’s Prayer. The next time you have the chance, try looking at that prayer for its lessons. Do not think of it just as a model that we have to pray with the exact words, though we often do pray it that way. Look at the various lines of it, and think of each one as guidance as to the type of prayer that we should be praying.

We believe, we are taught, that prayer is important, that we ought to pray. Why? I mean, apart from Jesus’ telling us that we should pray, what are the reasons? What is the point of praying?

If we look at how we actually tend to pray, it looks as if the main answer is “to get things we want.” Most of our prayers seem to be supplication for ourselves or intercession for others. Lord help me with this; or give me that; keep so and so safe. I am far from saying that these prayers are not appropriate. But notice how Jesus instructed us to pray in the prayer he taught us. Yes, we are urged to pray for ourselves, but not for specific needs or goals. When we pray the Lord’s Prayer we are asking only for what? For our daily bread—simply our basic physical needs for survival. And for our basic needs for moral well-being—forgiveness and deliverance from evil and from temptation. No long Christmas list of desired goodies.

If we stop there, with praying for our basic needs, we are still no more than self-absorbed in our prayer life. Remember “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done”? So we are to pray for God’s kingdom—the work of the church in the world. For the good of the world. And we do this, as well,

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even if at times we may be more invested in our own needs than in God's work in the world.

But we also pray for our own spiritual good in a way different from asking for our own moral and spiritual safety. We pray because the praying itself helps form us. We pray in order to be a praying people, a people of prayer. This is itself a form of spiritual formation.

And I believe we pray for the sense of solidarity with each other. When we pray together, we are as one, one people connected by that prayer. I know that imagery is important for some people's prayer life. I don't often use images—I am more verbal than pictorial, but occasionally in a spiritual setting, when praying with others, I find an image coming to mind. I don't know why, but I imagine a red ribbon wending its way in the midst of us, circling each of us individually, connecting each of us to each other. And I am at such times blessed with a powerful sense of oneness in that prayer.

I said I am blessed. And that is another reason why we need prayer. For often times in prayer we are open to feeling God's presence within us. You must know what I mean. When we are not so much caught up in the verbalization of the prayer, but simply feel a gift of joy, of a deep well being, a sense that all is well—really well, and a sense that God is sharing his joy with us. And worry and bother and frustrations just melt away in a great bath of well being. We are, as a nun I once knew said, just hanging out with God. I am sure that more experienced or more spiritual people than I can experience this more deeply, more often, and for longer periods of time. But I am profoundly grateful to God for that gift, for those times when I am able to allow him to fill me.

Two men went up to the temple to pray. We know the story. The Pharisee, who is, by the way, a very good man. Do not forget that. He is quite right that he is not a thief or adulterer, and he does fulfill his religious obligations. He is more like us than the tax collector is. This tax collector is a bad man. He is a collaborator with the oppressive Romans against his own

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people, and he is almost surely a cheater besides, as tax collectors were notorious for collecting more than required so that they could grow rich in the office. When we think our way into this parable, we come to prayer not as the tax collector but as the Pharisee.

Actually the Pharisee is a lot like Paul. In the letter to Timothy, Paul says that he has fought the good fight and finished the race. He has kept the faith. He sounds as full of himself as does the Pharisee. And when we come to prayer, we also often come with a sense of self-satisfaction. Remember how I talked about the feeling of wellbeing and spiritual satisfaction than I sometimes experience in prayer? What keeps Paul from falling into the trap of the Pharisee? Indeed what can keep me, or any of us, from that trap?

And the answer is that, as Paul goes on to make clear—and as we must continually remind ourselves, it is really not about us, but about God. Paul's good fight is not about his virtues, but about God's work in him. And the satisfactions, the joys, of our prayer lives is not our accomplishment, but God's gift to us.

Paul knows the heavenly kingdom; we know the joy of God's presence. These are not just gifts to come. When Jesus says the humble will be exalted, he is not just talking about a future kingdom. For the kingdom of God is indeed at hand. It is within us. And in our being humbled in the world's terms, we are already exalted.

A prayer life that embraces so much more than our own needs, that humbles us, brings God powerfully present to us and exalts us. There is no greater thing. We are never exalted any higher.

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Updates from the Church Family

t all adds up . . .

Many thanks to Don Hicks and Mike Hulley for their work doing the yearly audit of our books that is required by the diocese. Don has headed up the audit team for several years and is now stepping down. Mike will be looking for an assistant for next year's audit. Any volunteers. With all the procedures in place, this task has gotten easier year by year.

Many hands, light work

And thanks to all of you who turned out for the St. John's workday, organized by Walter Wilson. Lots of weeds got pulled and whacked; pews got cleaned and oiled, and Kenneth and Morgan entertained us all, riding their "car" round and round the church lawn. Church dog Jake took advantage of all the open doors to escape and roam the streets of Granby. In the following week carpets were cleaned and windows washed throughout the church, so everything was in tiptop shape for the bishop's visit.

Pot-luck? I guess so

Under the supervision of Jr. Warden Amy Zacek-Smith, the cooks of St. John's came through once again with a terrific brunch to celebrate the bishop's visit. Thanks to Amy and to all who contributed.

A little learning is a good thing!

Educational opportunities coming up include an adult forum on contemplative prayer led by Sharry Erzinger on Sunday, November the 14th. Then, Fr. Spencer's annual Advent teaching series will be offered the first three Sundays of Advent, beginning on November 28th. The topic this year will be pastoral care.

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Let there be . . .

Light! Yes the new lights for the parish hall have finally arrived and been installed, so that one can actually see what one is doing in there now. This completes the renovation of the old worship space, which has also seen a new ceiling and, for the first time, quality insulation between ceiling and roof.

A Prayer for Openness

Remember the Holy One is with you. Bring to mind this loving presence within you and around you as you pray the following:

1. *Touch your fingertips to you forehead, saying:*
Open my mind to remember your presence.
2. *Touch your fingertips to your mouth, saying:*
Open my mouth to speak your wisdom.
3. *Touch your fingertips to your heart, saying:*
Open my heart to extend your love.
4. *Hold both hands out, open, palms up, saying:*
Open my hands to serve you generously.
5. *Holding arms wide open, saying:*
Open my whole being to you.

Make a deep bow to the loving presence in you.

***Open the Door by Joyce Rupp, p.13

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November 2010

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
	1	2	3	4	5	6
				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	10 AM OUTREACH MEETING	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER * 6 PM VESTRY MEETING	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY Y	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 10:30 AM ADULT FORUM						8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
28	29	30				
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 10:30 AM ADULT FORUM						

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