

# A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



**AUGUST 2011**

As we come to the last month of Fr. Spencer's tenure at St. John's, we begin to focus on transition and on preparing for an interim period during which we will not have a priest in residence. But not to worry, all this will be accomplished, and we will still have time to live into one of our core values—to celebrate all of life! For August, in addition to regular services and meetings we look forward to the following special events.

On Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> we celebrate Holy Eucharist in an outdoor setting at the AA barn on the banks of the Colorado River, followed by barbecue, games, and hiking. Directions are available by the church mailboxes.

A special adult forum session will be held at noon on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> at St. John's, as Kaye Piper will lead a discussion about visiting patients or shut-ins.

And, tentatively, we will mark the end of summer with a sung Evensong on the Lake on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup>, gathering at the Grand Lake Marina at 4:45, with picnic dinner to follow.

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### A Word from the Rector

Dear Friends

I had a rare and wonderful experience just last week. A neighbor of mine in Broomfield had asked to see me. It turned out that he had heard that I was an Episcopal Priest and was convinced that God had sent me to him. He had been to a funeral service at St. John's Episcopal Church in Boulder and had simply loved it. He loved the cathedral type architecture, the liturgy, the people. (He said that he had never met an Episcopalian that he didn't like, but I told him to just hang in there for a while!) He admired the Episcopal Church and, after much prayer, this life time Baptist decided that he wanted to join the Episcopal Church.

What I haven't mentioned is that he is in home hospice, dying of congestive heart failure, with a very uncertain time to live, so we had to move quickly. Of course, one can join St. John's, or any other particular Episcopal Church, simply by showing up and participating, and we do an incorporation rite every Easter Sunday. But the only way to join the national church is by being baptized, confirmed, or received into it by the bishop, just as several of our members were received into the church during the bishop's last visit here.

So I approached the Rev. Canon Carl Andrews at the diocese to ask his help. Our current bishop Rob is still recovering from a serious cycling accident and was unable to help. So Carl contacted our retired bishop, the Rt. Rev. Jerry Winterrowd. Jerry's response? "Just tell me where and when, and I'll be there." So it was on Tuesday morning, July 26, that Bishop Jerry, Carl, the Rev. Kim Seidman (of Holy Comforter, Broomfield), Karla, and I joined Jim and his wife Courtney at their home, across the street from where Karla and I live. Bishop Jerry conducted a brief, but moving, ceremony featuring Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

Jim was thrilled as the bishop laid his hands on him and anointed him with oil and confirmed him in the Episcopal Church. The next day Jim told me

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he was still on cloud nine. All present agreed that it was a special moment for us all and a privilege to a part of it.

When I first met Jim, he asked whether it made any sense to become an Episcopalian in the last few days of his life. I told him that all our lives are a spiritual journey, and that if he felt God was calling him to take this step as a part of that journey, then it was just a important for him to do it now as it would have been at any other time in his life.

Talking with Jim reminded me that when I was in discernment about whether to pursue ordination to the priesthood, I asked a similar question of Bishop Jerry's Canon to the Ordinary. Does it really make sense, I asked, for me already in my 50s, to invest the time (and money!) to become a priest. And Bert answered me, "As far as we know, God may be calling you to be a priest for just one single task as one particular moment." I came to see that if God was calling me to be a priest, it was just as important for me to say yes then as it would be at any other time in my life.

Something in Jim made him feel that he was at some level meant to be an Episcopalian, and something in me made me feel that I was at some level meant to be a priest.

Each of us has felt a call to live out our spiritual journey in the Episcopal Church. We continue to find it an enriching and satisfying way of being with God and with others. And within that faith commitment, we will experience other such calls from God, some momentous and some not so momentous. When you feel that inner pull—Go for it! Be the person that God is calling you to be. And do it with whatever time and strength you may have left in which to live out your calling.

Remember that the workers late to the vineyard received the same reward as those who came early.

Fr. Spencer

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## Senior Warden Report

July 30, 2011

I am planning to submit regular updates in the newsletter on the transition period after Fr. Spencer transfers to his new ministry in Boulder. The Vestry met on July 22 and made a few decisions. The first decision was to send out a Community Portfolio Questionnaire to the whole church membership. This portfolio will give prospective rectors a good idea about St. John's – our culture, demographics, priorities, etc. You should have received the questionnaire by e-mail. If not, please contact me or any member of the Vestry for a copy of the questionnaire. Your opinions are important! We hope to have all the questionnaires returned to us by August 7. Place your completed questionnaire in the box next to the mail boxes in the hall of St. John's.

The second decision was to ask for nominations for the search committee. If you are interested in serving on the committee or would like to nominate someone, please let any member of Vestry know by August 14. We hope to have a search committee established before Rev. Lou Blanchard, Cannon Missioner visits on August 24. I have been getting a lot of questions, suggestions, concerns expressed about the transition. This is completely understandable and I appreciate everything everyone has to contribute, so please keep it up! I had a nice lunch meeting with Gene and Sally Ackley last week. Gene was the Senior Warden during the last transition before Fr. Spencer. It was a great meeting and I enjoyed learning about how the process went. All for now!

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## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Notes about Ministries

### *Let a thousand flowers bloom*

Fr. Spencer neglected to mention after service on July 17 that the beautiful altar flowers were the gift of J.R. and Marit Faivre in memory of their parents. This is an opportune time to remind everyone that for a gift of \$30 we can have beautiful fresh flowers for the Sunday service and commemorate significant persons or events in our lives at the same time. Please consider signing up on the Worship bulletin board outside the kitchen to cover an upcoming service. August, September, and October are wide open!

### *Knowing our multiplication tables*

St. John's did its own yearly "multiplication" of loaves and fishes on Loaves and Fishes Sunday, July 31. We had a terrific outpouring of giving for the food pantry at the Mountain Family Center. Thanks to all of you who supported this drive. If you somehow forgot or were out of town, you can always make up for it by dropping off your donation in the narthex at any time.

### *Women of the book*

Two recent donations to the St. John's library are *The Women's Bible Commentary* and *All of the Women of the Bible*. It has been suggested (!) that sometimes the contributions of women are ignored, minimized, or misunderstood; if you are curious about the treatment of women in the Bible, you have some resources here to satisfy that curiosity. And don't neglect to check out the library. Our holdings have been enriched in several areas recently. All books or videos can be borrowed on the honor system.

### *Conventional wisdom*

Our conventional wisdom this year is embodied in Senior Warden Brad Orr, Michele Simmons, and Kaye Piper, who, in addition to clergy, will be our delegates to diocesan convention. This year's convention will be held

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October 6-8 in Grand Junction. Our thanks to all three for giving up their time to represent us.

### *Worshiping with quality*

Your worship committee, led by Loretta McLaughlin, and augmented by several additional volunteers, met last week to begin planning for covering worship services during the transition period between Fr. Spencer and our next rector. The Sunday service will be simplified somewhat to make things easier both for supply priests and for those doing bulletin preparation. There will be no prayer list/announcements bulletin inserts. We will continue to have a children's service on the first Sunday of the month, and Deacon Diane will take a larger part in working with the children in this service. It was agreed that with the exception of the few weeks at the shoulder season when attendance is way down, we would continue to offer a full service of Holy Eucharist at Cranmer Chapel. When there is no Eucharist, there will be lay-led Evening Prayer.

There is a lot to do around music selection, service planning, bulletin preparation, co-ordination with supply priests and arrangement for their lodging. Many thanks to Loretta, and to Rae Wilson, Michele Simmons, Kaye Piper, Stu Findley, Joan Von der Heiden, Deacon Sally, and Deacon Diane for stepping up to make all this work smoothly.

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## Sermon of the Month

**Sermon preached Sunday, July 10**

“Listen, a sower went out to sow.” And Jesus goes on to tell a story, an allegory, that is, a story in which virtually each element of the story stands for something. Just what the elements of the story stand for, we will look at in a bit. But I want to start by remarking on what a powerful symbol of hope is the sower. Anyone who plants a seed is exhibiting hope, some degree of confidence in the future, that something good will come of this investment of time and labor. So this is above all a story about hope.

As Jesus explains the parable, the word of the kingdom (what we call the Gospel) is the seed; anyone who preaches that Gospel is the sower; and the different qualities of the soil represent different hearers of the Gospel. Sometimes the soil is good, and sometimes it is not. And even when the soil is OK, sometimes there is an intervening event that messes things up. Sometimes the message finds receptive ears and sometimes it does not.

So that is the general shape of the parable. Question: where are we in this story? Where am I? Where are you? One obvious answer is that we are the sower; we are the ones who spread the word. And we sow this Gospel word, sometimes to good effect and sometimes not. The ending of the parable, when Jesus talks about great returns from the good soil, suggests that the story is told to encourage those who preach the Gospel not to give up when the results seem meager. It is not your fault. Sometimes the ground is just stony, the hearts of the listeners are hard. It's OK. Keep plugging. When the soil is good, you will have your reward.

Some missionary fields are ripe and receptive. Others are not. Last week we had two visitors at our Thursday Bible study, David and Ann Dedrick, friends of Al and Betty. They are missionaries in Mozambique. And they told stories of whole villages becoming Christian. Of people hungering for the Gospel and responding. But I have also heard stories of missionaries who labor for years, with little obvious gain. It's OK. Both are

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faithfully carrying on the work of the Gospel. And when one of us invites someone to church, or “witnesses” to another about the impact that God or the church or the life of faith has had in our lives, we are equally as faithful, regardless of the response, regardless of the lack of obvious results.

I deliberately say lack of *obvious* results, because none of us know that long term effects our sowing may have. The stony ground may harbor a seed for some time until the conditions change and suddenly there is growth. I can think of several people who sowed the seed of the word to me without immediate result. But later, . . . well you know the rest of that story.

So this parable is about the need to continue to sow the Gospel seed without worrying about the results. Are we faithful sowers?

So we can see ourselves as the sower. But toward the end of the parable Jesus speaks more about the quality of the ground, or the one who hears the Gospel. And if we identify in this parable with the ground, then it becomes an exhortation to us to be receptive listeners, to make sure that we are good soil and that we do not allow the world to choke the Gospel when it is preached to us. Do we remain open to the word? Are we faithful listeners?

As I wondered about this parable, it occurred to me that we might also see ourselves as the seed itself. Remember Chap Cranmer’s favorite line from St. Francis? “Preach the Gospel constantly; when necessary use words.” So the Gospel need not be in the form of words. We have not only the model of the sower sowing the words, we have the model of the sower modeling the Gospel in his or her life. We become the seed, the message. But this means that we are not just talking about the quality of the ground, but the quality of the seed. Not the quality of the Gospel, of course, but the quality of our witness to it in the living of our lives.

If we are the seed, then it seems that God is the sower, and the world is the ground, and then the message of the parable is that we are to live Gospel lives. Are we faithful in our witness to the Gospel in our lives?

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Blessed is the faithful preacher who tells the truth of the Gospel; blessed is the faithful listener who can receive that Gospel; and blessed is the one whose life *shows* people the truth of the Gospel. All three operate out of hope. “Listen, a sower went out to sow.”

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## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST Updates from the Church Family

### *The big “9-0”*

The birthday we all dread, the big 9-0 or 90<sup>th</sup>, is coming up for our dear Betty Cranmer on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Congratulations, Betty! Most of us can only hope to be so alert and energetic on our big “7-0.” Have a truly happy and productive 10<sup>th</sup> decade.

### *Moving on’*

St. John’s will never be the same after this fall, as Al and Betty Clark announced in church that they will be moving back to Idaho Falls sometime “before the snow flies.” Both Al and Betty have been right at the heart of this community for over twenty years and, as has been remarked before, we will never know how many things around the church they do, until they are gone and we suddenly discover things we take for granted not getting done. God bless you both; we will miss you more than you know.

### *This just in!*

As the above item was being typed, the phone has just rung with the news that Al, who had surgery to remove moisture from the brain on Wednesday July 27<sup>th</sup> will be released and back home on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup>. We had already heard that the surgery was successful, and now we know that the recovery is going extremely well. Bravo, Al.

### *More movin’ on*

Jim and Helen Keesey, who attend at Cranmer Chapel, will be moving from Fraser to the Front Range in the next few weeks in order to be at lower altitude and to be closer to family. Jim, a retired Methodist pastor, and Helen are founders of a Parkinson’s support group which meets monthly at St. John’s. We will miss them at the chapel.

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### *From the mission field*

Our Thursday night Bible group was blessed with a visit from David and Ann Dedrick, old friends of Al and Betty Clark. The Dedricks are missionaries to Mozambique and entertained the group with inspiring stories of their work. And speaking of missionaries, check out the ministries bulletin board in the parish hall for a letter about the work of Joanne LeClair and Protus in Kenya. We support the Kenyan Children's Foundation with our donations and prayers.

### *Reading you loud and clear*

Millie Schrader has been fitted with a pair of new hearing aids and reports that she has now heard the first sermon from Fr. Spencer since she has been here. She now has the option of hearing the sermon or turning off her aids, whichever seems best at the time!

### *Medical reports*

Karla Allen is realizing some healing in the optical nerve leading to her right eye, which is great news, but not yet in the left, which is not so great. Jim Cartwright underwent successful shoulder replacement surgery in Steamboat Springs on July 18 and is now re-habbing at the Doak Walker Care Center there. Everything looks good at this point. Continue to pray for recovery for continued recovery for Karla and for Jim.

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SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
	1	2	3	4	5	6
				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10 AM HOLY EUCHARIST AT AA BARN	NOON ADULT FORUM ON PASTORAL VISITING			6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER * 6:30 PM VESTRY MEETING	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST	11 AM GRANBY 4TH OF JULY PARADE		5:30 PM VESTRY MEETING	6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY	3 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
28	29	30	31			
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 4:45 PM EVENSONG ON THE LAKE (GRAND LAKE MARINA)						

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