

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



SEPTEMBER 2011

There are many changes in St. John's future, and one of these will be this newsletter. This will be the last issue of A Voice in the Wilderness, at least in this form. After Fr. Spencer's departure, communication in our community will look very different. And to emphasize this time of transition, the two events we have to look forward to this month are both "farewells."

Sunday the 4th will be Fr. Spencer's last Sunday as rector of St. John's, with potluck lunch to follow service.

And the following Sunday, the 11th, we say goodbye to Al and Betty Clark and celebrate their long and devoted service to St. John's. (Fr. Spencer will be supply priest!)

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A Word from the Rector

A change in leadership in any organization is a time both for looking back and for looking forward.

So we look back on ten good years together. We grew as a parish in numbers by about 20% and in budget by close to 30%. We grew the outreach program, established pastoral support programs, developed a Sunday worship service with both reverence and energy, learned a lot together, and had great times together. In short we lived into our core values. There is so much to celebrate. Thank you all for what you have contributed to this progress.

Okay, enough about looking back. Let's look forward. There are still serious challenges facing St. John's, and it will take the commitment of all its members to keep it on track. You will need to support your new rector just as strongly as you did me as he or she leads you through these challenges. We don't know just what those challenges will be, but one is likely to be financial, as early indications are that expenses may increase at just the same time that we will be losing pledge income. It will be crucial both that St. John's continue to grow in numbers and that current members continue to step up to close any pledging gap. We have always been able to do this in the past, and it will be necessary to continue to do so.

Years from now, if I am granted those years, when I talk to old friends from the church, I do not want to hear that the ten years we spent together were St. John's glory years. I want to hear that after I left, St. John's built on what we have done together and went on to even greater accomplishments—to continued growth, greater service, more powerful pastoral work, a deeper sense of spiritual worship, greater learning, and more good times together. But it will take a powerful commitment to make it all happen. I know that you have it in you to do it.

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I know it because I have seen it over the past ten years. I have been so blessed to serve you, and I thank you all for the wonderful support you have been for Karla and me. It has truly been a blessed time for us.

Karla and I love you all, every single one of you. God bless you and God bless St. John's. We will miss you very much.

--Fr. Spencer

P.S. Come visit us at St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Boulder!

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

In the great outdoors

St. John's record of enjoying beautiful weather for our outdoor events was extended once, and then broken, this last month. On Sunday August 7 we traveled to the AA barn on the Colorado River for a magnificent outdoor service. We were joined by many guests, one fisherman in waders from the river, and a splendid osprey soaring overhead with a snake in its beak. Kay treated us to a full hour or more of great cabaret type music as we munched on barbecue and side dishes.

And then on August 28, the intrepid thirteen folks who showed up at Grand Lake for our Evensong on the Lake were greeted by rain and cool temperatures. It was a close call, but we gathered to sing Evening Prayer beneath the pavilion in the park and then had dinner together at the Sagebrush. It was still a good evening.

Passing the torch

In the interim between rectors it is of course necessary for laity to pick up necessary ministries in order to keep the church functioning. We are all very grateful to the following people for agreeing to oversee an important area of church life.

Brad Orr—Facilities use by outside groups

Amy Zacek-Smith—monitoring of kitchen, supplies, etc.

Joe Fuqua—Building and grounds at St. John's

Jim Magill and Beth Collins—Building and grounds at Cranmer Chapel

Tom Papatkakis—Communications

Loretta McLaughlin—Worship services

Kaye Piper—Pastoral care

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An "A" for neatness

The area outside of our main level back door will look considerably neater and cleaner in the future, as our new storage shed (for trash bins, grill, shovels, etc.) is now complete. It blends in nicely with the main building and looks great. We also expanded the concreted area in order to make possible the occasional outdoor coffee hour when weather is good. Many thanks to Kirk Lietzke for his good work in making this possible.

In honor of Fr. Spencer's retirement and Karla and Spencer's new life together;

For Retirement by John O'Donohue

This is where your life has arrived,
After all the years of effort and toil;
Look back with graciousness and thanks
On all your great and quiet achievements.

You stand on the shore of new invitation
To open your life to what is left undone;
Let your heart enjoy a different rhythm
When drawn to the wonder of new horizons.

Have the courage for a new approach to time;
Allow it to slow until you find freedom
To draw alongside the mystery you hold
And befriend your own beauty of soul.

Now is the time to enjoy your heart's desire,
To live the dreams you've waited for,
To awaken the depths beyond your work
And enter into your infinite source.

Submitted by Kaye Piper

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Sermon of the Month

Sermon preached August 28

Last week we heard Paul's admonition, "Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed in your minds," and we spent some time reflecting on the ways in which we should and should not be influenced by the culture around us. This morning I want to continue this reflection, prompted by two sayings of Jesus in our Gospel lesson. The world tells us, and most of us would agree, that we are to avoid pain and suffering on the one hand, and that we are to pursue our own self-fulfillment on the other. I would never say that we should seek out suffering, nor that we should not seek fulfillment, but I want to suggest that the world manages to distort and to deceive us with its understanding of these goals.

Let's look at poor Peter. He is so human. Jesus tells him that he, Jesus, must undergo suffering and death, and Peter, being so human, wants to deny the necessity of suffering. He assumes that with God on our side, so to speak, that normal human suffering can be avoided. And certainly for the Son of Man; certainly for him there can be no suffering. But Jesus tells him that this kind of thinking is of a human sort and not divine. Apparently suffering is very much a part of God's plan for us.

We don't like this message. We are as human as Peter and we wish to deny the necessity of suffering. For Jesus, for him to accomplish what he needed to do, it was necessary for him to suffer. And for us, for us to do what we need to do will often necessarily involve suffering.

We do better when we think of suffering abstractly. Which is another way of saying we do better when we are not involved in the suffering. I have known several people whose faith in God has been undermined by their own losses and suffering. These same people, of course, have known that millions of other people undergo suffering, that people around the world are

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suffering and dying in wars, famines, natural disasters, and normal diseases. And that suffering has not threatened their faith. But when *they* know

suffering, everything is different. It's suddenly, "How could God allow this to happen?"

I have some ideas about why it is that God seems willing to allow so much suffering. I think that he is much more interested in our growing spiritually and morally than he is in our comfort level. And indeed, which would we choose for ourselves and our children? That they lead comfortable lives or that they be strong, moral, spiritually mature persons.

The purpose of life is not to avoid suffering; it is to do what is necessary to be the kinds of people we need to be. We do what is necessary.

That's about avoidance of what we don't want. Something that we are supposed to want is self-fulfillment. We all want to be fulfilled. But there is a paradox here. Normally if we want something, we pursue it. But fulfillment is not like that. We cannot attain fulfillment by seeking it. It must always involve seeking something else. Because we are fulfilled when we satisfy, when we attain some other goal. The goal may be trivial or profound or any place in between. It may be watching your team win a football game, running a marathon, taking part in a great musical concert, curing cancer, whatever. But it is only when we give ourselves up to some goal or cause that we can be fulfilled when it is accomplished. It necessary involves some goal beyond fulfillment.

In a recent op-ed column in the New York Times, David Brooks wrote about how so many college graduates are given really bad advice. Over and over again, they are told to follow your own passion, march to the beat of your own drummer, follow your dreams and find your true self. This is good old American individualism at its worst. This is to make the self the center of life; it makes everything about you. It says that everything is possible. But

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the tasks of a real life are about limiting possibilities—making commitments to a partner, a job, a community, a calling, to various causes. It is about finding serious things to tie yourself to, finding things that matter. If you

seek to find your life in yourself and your own self-expression, you will lose it. It is in losing yourself to these various causes that you find yourself.

The purpose of life is not to avoid suffering it is to do what is necessary.

The purpose of life is not to find your life, it is to lose it.

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Updates from the Church Family

Ninety (that's 90) years young

The week-end of August 27-28 will long be remembered, and not just by those of us at St. John's. It was a community celebration of Betty Cranmer's 90th birthday. First, there was a family celebration of 60+ persons, including ten visitors coming from the U.K., which was held in our own Parish Hall. Then, there was a special celebratory Anglican High Tea following Sunday worship service, courtesy of Monica Fuqua and Joan Von der Heiden, with help from others. And finally there was a party open to the community at Polhamus Park, featuring the music of Kay Irvine. So in the space of little more than a day, Betty was feted by family, church, and community—all of whom she has touched in so many ways over the years. Incidentally, Betty's family boosted Sunday's church service to 85, the largest turnout since an Easter several years ago. Happy Birthday, Betty, and many happy returns.

Changing of the Guard

On Sunday, September 11, we celebrate the many years, shared work, and good times spent with Al and Betty Clark, two persons for whom the term "pillars of the church" would seem to have been invented for. They will be deeply missed, in many different ways. As Fr. Spencer has often said, "We will not know how much Al and Betty do around St. John's until they leave us, and we see how many things—large and small—turn out not to get done." The Clark's anticipate a departure in early October. God bless, good speed, and many, many, thanks.

A gathering of wardens

No, not of the prison variety. Ken and Joan Von der Heiden hosted a dinner party on August 14th for Fr. Spencer and Karla and all the Senior Wardens who have served over the last ten years. It was a time for thanksgiving for faithful ministry and also for a sobering thought about how many wardens

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Fr. Spencer has gone through in just ten years! It must be a hard duty. Many thanks, Ken and Joan!

A voice from the past

Joe Wetherill, now well ensconced in Oklahoma called to say goodbye to Fr. Spencer this past week. He wants people to know that he is getting along “okay,” these days, but has to pace himself carefully. He sends fond greetings to all his old friends at St. John’s.

Update and thanks

Karla wants everyone to know that she has very much appreciated your cards and support over the last five months since her accident. And she especially thanks all those who volunteered to driver her up the mountain for Sunday services. It has been extremely helpful for her and for Fr. Spencer. As for her condition, one eye is still showing no signs of coming around. The good news is that there may well be a surgical way to intervene to get both eyes working together, though we still pray that that will not be necessary.

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SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
				1	2	3
				6:45 PM BIBLE STUDY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 AM HOLY FR. SPENCER LAST SUNDAY						8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * FAREWELL PARTY FOR AL & BETTY CLARK						8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST	8 AM SEEKERS MEETING AT JAVA LAVA					8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
25	26	27	28	29	30	
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST						

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