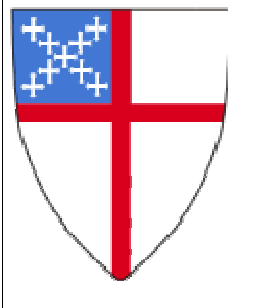


The Fabric of St. John's



Parish News of
St. John's Episcopal Church
Alma, Michigan



September 2009

Pastor's Corner

This month I am changing my usual approach to this column to discuss with you what I perceive to be some of the misunderstandings regarding Health Care Reform. As most of you know, health care policy was an area of research and teaching for me when at University.

First of all, no one will be denied health care regardless of age. Second, the Congress is not planning on switching us to a single payer system such as Canada's; though frankly that would save us billions of dollars and increase our longevity and maternal child mortality rate; but more about that later.

Third, everyone who is happy with his or her insurance can keep it. Four, premiums will not skyrocket if those 46 million who have no insurance are covered in the new bill. Why? we are already paying for the uninsured through increasingly higher premiums. When insurance companies negotiate with hospitals about the cost of care, the cost of the uninsured is spread across all the insurance companies.

Finally, if 98% of our citizens can be covered by health insurance, we would become a much healthier population because everyone would have a doctor. If everyone had a doctor, then our health statistics might approach those of the rest of the developed world. At present we are 14th in longevity and 21st in maternal child mortality rates. Canada and western Europe are way ahead of us; they have had universal health coverage since just after WWII. It makes one wonder if their health care system is so bad, why are their statistics better on all health parameters

(Pastor's Corner continued)

Could we go to a single payer system?

Unfortunately not practical; we have an employer based entrepreneurial health care system which can be made more efficient and that is what the congressional bills from the senate and the house are trying to accomplish.

Who is presently not insured? Of the 46 millions without health insurance 75% are working. Of those 46 million, 80% are between the ages of 18 and 35. These statistics have not changed in the last 20 years. If you would like to have a discussion of health care policy and what it could mean for all of us, I would be happy to have that discussion.

God's blessings as you consider some of the changes that are ahead of us.

Mary+

Daughters of the King Prayer

LORD, quiet my heart and mind so that I am willing to wait on you, not with grumbling and frustration but with hope and assurance that you do everything in your perfect timing. Give me patience, and help me to look for your answers to the requests I make of you. And increase my faith that you are working, even when I must wait for your answer. Amen.

Daughters of the King News

Thanks to everyone who has helped with the blankets, and with the collection of school supplies. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated. We will be hosting a Taize' service on Sunday, Sept 20th at 6pm. All are welcome. It is a time for quiet reflection and prayer. Our next business meeting will be Sept 27th after service. For His Sake.

Youth Group

Youth group (7th-9th grade) will be meeting Sunday mornings at 9 starting Sept 13th. We will continue to have group discussions over breakfast at Burger King monthly. We hope to come up with some exciting events and projects for this year. Come check us out.

Wendy

Outreach in August

Have you participated in our August Outreach? We had a tied blanket group on Saturday, August 8th. We completed two blankets for the patients in the Dialysis Unit at Gratiot Medical Center. It's a fun project for those who participate. We can talk while working and have lunch together about 12:30. Anyone can come—men, women, or children. Henry, a golden retriever, was present on August 8th to watch us work!

We prepared food and took it to St. Paul's, Saginaw, on Sunday, August 16th, to feed those who are hungry. The food was prepared here on Saturday, the 15th, and Sunday morning a group carried the food to St. Paul's and served it. Did you help prepare the food or go to Saginaw to serve it? That is Outreach from our church!

The school supplies are piling up on the table in the library next to the office. You can contribute notebooks, pencils, pens, backpacks or any other item from a long list. When school starts the supplies will go to the Alma Middle School for those students who can't afford to purchase their own. Are you participating in this Outreach?

Bishop Todd Ousley Visits St. John's

On Sunday, August 23rd, Bishop Ousley came to St. John's. He brought his whole family, wife Anne, and sons Ian, Josh and Dae. He took part in the Christian education at 9:00 a.m. and then preached and celebrated at the 10:00 a.m. service. He talked about the communion and receiving the body and blood of Christ. He spoke about his newly adopted sons coming to church for the first time and

kneeling at the altar rail to receive the bread and wine. He knew they had not been baptized but he could not refuse them communion. Because of the rubrics of the church, he was not supposed to feed those who had not been baptized, but he could not cause his new sons to feel rejected. Bishop Ousley talked further about being chastised by fellow clergy for giving communion to the unbaptized, but his Bishop understood. Needless to say, the sons were soon baptized. He asked us what receiving the body and blood of Christ meant in our lives and members of the congregation responded in several ways. It's too bad if you missed this sermon which was inspiring in so many ways. We felt we had a good choice in Bishop Ousley.

He will not come again to our church for about a year and a half, but we will feel his presence in the life of our church.

At the coffee hour, we had a light luncheon for all who stayed, and again the Bishop spoke with us about many matters. Too bad if you missed this!

Come to Bible Study!

Come on Wednesday, September 9th, at 11:00 a.m. We will be studying Ezra and Nehemiah from the Old Testament. Studying Ezra and Nehemiah we are concerned about people who are different than we are. We look at differences between Jews. We can look at differences between Christians. Come and participate in some interesting discussions on Wednesday mornings.

Prayer Requests

Prayers for guidance and healing are asked for the following people.

Karl Ruchman (Radzibon relative in the military)

Karl Wakeman (Member who needs guidance and healing)

Marvin Coffey (Ruszkowski relative)

Patricia Andrews (Member who broke her hip in a fall)

Steven Alexander (Son of Vlesta Alexander)

William Harris (Member at Masonic Home)

Christopher W. Holtz (Son of Chris and Angie Holtz having surgery for tonsils)

Gabrielle Kooi (Great-granddaughter of Dick and Carolyn Anderson, guidance as she starts another year of school)

September Birthdays

7 Shelby Schweri

9 Ivan Holtz

15 Corinne McMaster

18 Chris Holtz

18 Nicholas Van Cise

24 Christine Berry

Taize' Service

We will have a Taize' Service on Sunday, September 20th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Church. Come and be prepared for an hour and peace and quiet while you spend the time in prayer. There will be quiet music in the background. Reach out to God and he will fill you with his love.

THE SPECIAL COLORS OF SUMMER

There are lots of colors of summer, like the green grass, brilliant flowers, and leafy trees. But have you ever noticed in this area we are blessed with special colors of summer? There is the lush green of the corn fields with their golden halos. There is the creamy white blankets of ripening oats, the deep, dark green of various bean plants carpeting the fields, and the deep rust color of wheat, ripe for harvest. These are the special colors of summer. They come from God's paintbox, through the hands of the farmer, to all mankind, and we are blessed.

From Bev Anderson

News from Heather Anderson

For those of you who do not know Heather, she is the daughter of Basil and Bev Anderson. She graduated from Anderson College five or six years ago and immediately started running the Appalachian Trail. When she completed that, she ran the Continental Divide Trail, and then the Pacific Crest Trail. Each of these runs took several

months to complete. During the first run, she met Remy Levy, a young man from Israel, who was completing the same Trails, and they were married in the summer of 2007. Heather and Remy now live in Bellingham, Washington where Remy attends college and Heather works. Heather sends this report on their lives since she grew up in our parish and has many friends here.

Greetings from the Pacific Northwest! My mom recommended that I send a long overdue update on what Remy and I are up to here, so here is a condensed version.

Remy is enrolled at Western Washington University, where he has completed 2 quarters. He loves the campus and has made the President's List with a 4.0 average both quarters. He has been taking a variety of courses, one of which was a junior level Constitutional Law class which he loved. He had to convince the professor to sign him into the class (the professor never allows freshman in), and then proceeded to get an A. I am very proud of him. He is now exploring the possibility of going into law.

Remy has been working for a local bank since we arrived in Bellingham. With the current financial situation however, the bank downsized and he was transferred to another branch which he did not like working at, and was quite a distance from home and school. So he began to apply to National Parks around the country for summer work. He was hired to work in Sequoia National Park in California, one of the parks we backpacked through on the Pacific Crest Trail. He is currently working there, and loving the availability of extraordinary backpacking trails, great weather, and better working conditions.

I am still working at Logos Research Systems, a software company that makes digital Christian research books. I was recently promoted to Assistant Team Lead (meaning that I check other people's work as well as create books of my own). I enjoy working there. It is a great working environment and is a great way to help further the kingdom by providing a resource for people to use to study the Bible in a new and in-depth way. I work on the ancient languages team, so I work with lots of Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic, and Latin texts.

I have also taken up ultra-marathoning, which I enjoy very much. My first race was on March 21st in the Chuckanut Mountains on the south end of town. The course was 31.5 mi long and gained 4,000ft of elevation. I was on pace to complete the race in 5:30 when I was hit by intense dehydration cramps around mile 15. I completed the course in 6:11. My second race was June 20th. It was also in the Chuckanut Mountains, although the course was different. This one was 33.2 mi and had a whopping 8,200 ft of climbing! I learned from the mistakes of the first race and was able to complete this course in 6:56—which brought me in 6th place overall, and I placed 3rd for women. I hope to run the first race again next year and hopefully better my time by 45 min. I also hope to run a 50 miler next summer.

I have been volunteering at the local animal shelter, providing TLC time to cats and walking dogs. It has been a really rewarding experience to give unwanted animals love and attention and see them placed with loving families who will care for them.

Remy and I have also connected with many former thru-hikers who live in town. It is great to have friends who have such a unique experience in common with us! Currently one of them, Patrick, is re-hiking the Pacific Crest Trail and I have had the joy of being on the sending end of care packages. Another of the hikers in town and I intend to meet Patrick on the Pacific Crest Trail when he reaches Washington to hike 100 miles or so of the trail with him.

The summer weekends have been full of shorter hikes with these new friends in the beautiful mountains of Washington for me, and Remy has been able to explore the beauty of eastern California. I visited him the last week of July and got to see an old friend along the way.

While we are finally feeling that Bellingham is home, you at St. John's are never far from my thoughts. Love and blessings in Christ.

Heather Anderson

Courage

The subject of this newsletter article has changed since I first started to write to you. I still hope to get back to my original plans, but as we arrived back in Pakistan on August 1st and began to hear the news, I knew I would be dealing with practical faith rather than theoretical faith.

Think back to the stories in the Bible of the early martyrs – Stephen, Peter etc. Think back also to the Middle Ages and those burned at the stake for their faith – Joan of Arc, Jan Hus, etc. I used to think that those things could never happen today, but the events of the past two weeks have proved me wrong.

The Christian community in Pakistan (all two and a half percent of them) has always been an oppressed minority, discriminated against in every way. Many Muslims will not let them eat off a plate they would potentially use, shake their hands, or see them as fit for employment other than to sweep or clean toilets. Educational opportunities are, needless to say, not the same as for the majority community of Muslims. Now imagine going through your life under these circumstances with a name that is distinctively Christian. Many people do. This difficult situation came to a head at the end of July and early August. Not the first attack, but the worst came on the first of August when seven Christians were locked in houses by a mob incited by the mosques and burned alive in a town called Gojra outside of the larger city of Faisalabad. Two more died of injuries later. This time the Christians fought back and needless to say, feelings are running high on both sides.

Two elements of faith are coming to the fore here. Belief is not a problem. We have spent the last two Sunday's in 120 degrees heat in a full, un-airconditioned church (two hour service) with people of deep faith. Courage to confront is gaining strength, and we need to pray here for good judgment as to when to confront. But equally it takes courage to forgive and that is the delicate task before the Christian community now. Someone I know has compared the Christian faith to a mango tree. The branches without fruit are tall and proud reaching into the sky. The branches laden with delicious fruit bend down low and lovingly, humbly, feed all those who come seeking nurture.

Pray for the Christians of Pakistan as they pray and grow and love through this horrendous experience.

From Cindy Kabell after her return to Pakistan following a summer in the United States. She and Jerry have purchased a retirement home in Alabama, and they will move there when Jerry completes two more years of his contract at Forman Christian University in Lahore, Pakistan.

September Schedule

Tuesday, September 1

Wednesday, September 2

Thursday, September 3

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley Clericus at

St. Alban's, Bay City

Friday, September 4

Saturday, September 5

8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast at the Big Boy

Sunday, September 6

9:00 a.m. Adult Christian Education

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

Monday, September 7, Labor Day

Tuesday, September 8

9:00 a.m. Plaid Door Check Writing

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, September 9

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, September 10

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

Friday, September 11

Saturday, September 12

10:00 a.m. Episcopal Church Women

Sunday, September 13

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

11:30 a.m. Vestry Meeting

Monday, September 14

Tuesday, September 15

12:00 p.m. Commission on Ministry at
Diocesan Office

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, September 16

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, September 17

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

Friday, September 18

Saturday, September 19

Sunday, September 20

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

6:00 p.m. Taize' Service in Church

Monday, September 21

7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley Convocation

Meeting at St. Alban's, Bay City

Tuesday, September 22

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, September 23

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, September 24

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

12:00 p.m. Alma Clericus at His Place

Friday, September 25

Saturday, September 26

Sunday, September 27

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

11:30 a.m. Daughters of the King

Business Meeting

Monday, September 28

Tuesday, September 29

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, September 30

11:00 a.m. Bible Study