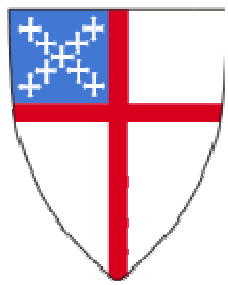


The Fabric of St. John's



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



February 2010

Pastor's Corner

It hardly seems possible that February 1, 2010 has arrived. First of all, I wish to welcome the new members of the vestry and pray that we will have a full and fruitful year of working together. Second, I wish to thank all of you who attended the annual meeting and contributed to its success.

This New Year is a time when Jesus reveals himself to us in real time. We have read in the Gospels since Epiphany, the many ways that Jesus revealed himself to the Jews of his time. First to the Magi, then at the time of his baptism by John when God the Father called him his beloved son; the third time he revealed himself to us through his disciples at the wedding feast of Cana turning the water into wine; and finally, when he returned to Nazareth and preached in his home town synagogue. Jesus is revealed in the ordinary and sacramental events of life then and life now. Jesus did very few miracles in comparison to his every day activities and his teaching of both his disciples and the crowds that gathered around him. I think this is an important lesson we have a tendency to overlook. Jesus is revealed to us daily in small ordinary events, not just in special times of prayer or miracles, large or small, which may occur in our lives.

Let us pray that this year will be a blessed one for all of our ministries and that we will see Christ revealed to us each day as we grow in our relationship with him.

God Bless and keep well,

Mary+

News from St. John's

The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, January 17th, following the 11 o'clock service. Reports from all the church organizations were put in the mailboxes, but time was allowed for questions about the reports.

We are looking for a ministry for the congregation. Since we are mainly a group of older parishioners, it was suggested we might be interested in elder care. A vote showed much interest in this idea and it was voted to ask Craig Zeese, Director of the Commission on Aging to come and speak to us. We will find a date for this to happen.

Doug Ballard talked to us about the finances of the church. Pledges are down this year with a loss of \$27,000 over last year. This means there will be cuts in places to be decided by the Vestry. Some of the money from the Helman bequest can be used to help with the budget.

Nominations for the 2010 Vestry were Doug Ballard, Christ Berry, and Kay Wohlfeill. They were approved by unanimous vote. The Vestry for 2010 will be these three plus Bev Anderson, Jake Hamilton, Kenalee Atchinson, Alex Radzibon and Nancy Mills. After much prayer the new Senior Warden and Junior Warden will be selected.

The meeting was adjourned to an excellent potluck.

Special Vestry Meeting

A special Vestry Meeting was held on Sunday, December 3rd, for vote on the housing allowance for Rev. Mary. The vote approved \$16,500 for the year 2010.

Chuck Zilch and Jay Atchinson are proposing a candlelight dinner, where the men will serve the women, adults only. It is scheduled for Saturday, February 20th, with a

cost of \$5.00 to \$10.00. The time will be set later. This was approved by the Vestry.

Church Service Times

In December the time for the Sunday Eucharist was changed from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. This was agreed upon to last through the winter months and then we would decide again. The congregation seems to be fairly evenly split as to which time they favor. Your next chance to vote will be at the end of March!!

Episcopal Church Women

ECW met on Saturday, January 9th, with only four members present. Special prayers were offered for Vickie Bethka's daughter, Dana, and for the Crispin family.

Thank you notes were received from the Adopt-a-Family project. There is a follow up to a previous recipient. Melba Demas will be visiting the woman who lives at a home for the mentally challenged and will be taking strings of beads for the nine residents. That was their request.

We need a chairperson for the Chili Cook-off in March, if we are to have it.

Most of the meeting time was taken up with a discussion of the need for ECW and whether the congregation wants to continue all the projects we cover. The number of women attending the meetings was a concern.

NOTE: ECW February meeting date changed! All women of the church are invited to meet on Sunday, February 21, during coffee hour. St. John's Episcopal Church Women (ECW) calendar of activities for winter into summer will be reviewed. Meeting times to prepare for the activities will be determined. Please come to share your ideas!!

Shirley Hamilton

February meeting chairperson

Daughters of the King Prayer

Lord, grant me a continual readiness and devotion to prayer. Open my eyes and heart to understand the great privilege you have given me in allowing me free access into your throne room. Give me a heart that is hungry to spend time with you. And as I do, prepare my mind and heart for the work you have for me to do for you and your kingdom.

Daughters of the King News

We will be setting up a mailbox for the newsletter so questions, articles, ideas can be left. Carolyn Anderson is looking for someone to take on the editing and typing duties of the newsletter.

We will be hosting our next blanket workshop on Saturday, February 13, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please bring a snack and note the time change. Hopefully it'll work better for several people. Also we could use patterned fleece 1 1/2 yards long that would coordinate with navy blue, red, or a burgundy/cranberry color. We have solids, but could use something to pair with them.

Our next Taize' service is scheduled for Sunday, March 21, at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome.

We are looking into the possibility of having a yard/craft sale this summer on the church lawn. Anyone that would be interested or know someone who would be interested, please talk to any DOK member so we can get an idea of feasibility.

Our next business meeting will be February 28 after the service.

For His Sake.

Wendy Brown

Youth Group

We are looking for ways to help out around the church, so if you have a small project (or not so small) give us a holler. We continue to hold monthly discussions at the local Burger King.

Wendy Brown

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Shrove Tuesday is February 16th and we will have our annual Pancake Supper from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The men of the church are responsible for cooking and serving the supper. All are welcome to attend. There is no charge, but a free will offering is accepted. Alex Radzibon is gathering the workers and Dick Anderson is getting the supplies. **BE SURE TO SAVE THIS DATE AND COME!!**

Ash Wednesday Services

Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, is February 17th. Services including the Eucharist and imposition of ashes will be at 12 noon and 7:00 p.m. It is essential that you begin the six-week period of Lent with one of the services. During Lent we will have a Lenten Study every Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. More information about the study will be available from the Rev. Mary Delaney.

Candle Light Dinner

The men of the church are planning a Candle Light Dinner for the women of the church to be held Saturday, February 20th, at 6:00 p.m. This is to be a very special occasion and the men are hoping that many will want to attend. The cost and more details will be available in February when plans are finalized.

United Thank Offering

The annual Ingathering will be held the first Sunday in May. Hopefully your Blue Boxes are filling up with coins of thankfulness. If you need more supplies, see any member of the Daughters of the King. Remember that every penny goes to provide grants for projects all over the world and throughout the dioceses in the United States. Drop a coin in whenever you are especially thankful for something in your life. We have much to be thankful for!!

Say Happy Birthday in February

- 1 Carolyn Anderson
- 1 Nancy Mills
- 1 Jackie Fishburn
- 7 Jim Brown
- 8 Andrea Davison
- 8 Doug Ballard
- 9 Shirley Hamilton
- 15 Audley (Barney) Smith
- 21 Cindy Kabell

Keep these people in your prayers. Pray for healing and guidance.

- Aaron Crispin (Crispin relative)
- Abigail Crispin (Crispin relative)
- A. J. Crispin (Crispin relative)
- Alana Rodgers (B. Gladding relative)
- Andrew Crispin (Crispin relative)
- Brian Myers (S. Grover friend)
- Cathleen McCain (Granddaughter of Dick and Carolyn Anderson)
- Daniel Crispin (Crispin relative)
- Grace Dean (B. Gladding relative)
- George Ruszkowski (E. Ruszkowski relative)
- Hannah Lyons (S. Grover relative)
- Herbert J. Smith III (Relative of H. J. Smith at Masonic Home)
- Janet Tucker (Daughter of Dick and Carolyn Anderson)
- Jody Crispin (Crispin relative)
- Justin and Shannon Gibson (Rector)
- Karl Wakeman (Member)
- Kay Crispin (Member)
- Kelly Sabatovich (E. Ruszkowski relative)
- Ray Benavidez (N. Kowitz relative)
- Karl Ruschman (A. Radzibon relative in the military)
- Tony Dill (Hamilton relative in the military)

Disaster in Haiti

The people of Haiti have suffered a devastating earthquake, and it is already clear

that many have died and many more are injured. Even under normal circumstances, Haiti struggles to care for her 9 million people. The nation is the poorest in the western hemisphere, and this latest disaster will set back many recent efforts at development. I urge your prayers for those who have died, been injured, and are searching for loved ones, and I urge your concrete and immediate prayers in the form of contributions to Episcopal Relief & Development, who are already working with the Diocese of Haiti to send aid where it is most needed. The Most Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

Special Contributions from former members of our Parish

Heather Anderson, daughter of Basil and Bev Anderson lives in Bellingham, WA. She grew up in this church, attended college at Anderson University in Anderson, IN and after walking the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine came home and was married to Remy Levy. Together they walked the Continental Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail. Now they have settled in Washington state so Remy can attend college. Heather has always been a committed Christian and she sends us this article titled "The Repair of the Broken World."

We also have an article from Jerry Kabell, a former member, who now teaches at George Forman Christian University in Lahore, Pakistan titled "Lead Us Not Into Temptation." Jerry was a long-time member of this parish when he taught at Central Michigan University. Jerry and Cindy left Mt. Pleasant in January 2006 and went to Murree, Pakistan where Jerry became principal at Murree Christian School. In 2008 he moved on to Lahore to take his present job. Cindy, his wife, is now living in Vernon, Alabama and is establishing their retirement home. They have a son, Ian, who lives in Weidman, MI, and is a rural mailman and a son, Kenneth, who has moved to Alabama and works at driving a truck. Cindy says he gets home about once a week for a day or so.

The Repair of the Broken World

Tikkun olam. (ti-koon oh-lam) (Hebrew: תיקון עולם) is a rabbinic concept that means, "repairing" or "perfecting the world." I first came across this important ancient concept of Judaism in a Friday evening Sabbath service over a year ago, and God has kept it in the back of my mind ever since, constantly reminding me of *my* responsibility in the repair of this world. I would like to share some of my thoughts with you as well.

First some background. From Wikipedia:

In Jewish thought ethical *mitzvot* as well as ritual *mitzvot* are important to the process of *tikkun olam*. Some Jews believe that performing *mitzvot* will create a model society among the Jewish people, which will in turn influence the rest of the world. By perfecting themselves, their local Jewish community or the state of Israel, the Jews set an example for the rest of the world.

For some Jews, the phrase *tikkun olam* means that Jews are not only responsible for creating a model society among themselves but also are responsible for the welfare of the society at large.

Mitzvot originally pertained to the 613 specific commandments of the Torah, but can also generally be interpreted as good works or acts of human kindness. As Christians, we have been released from the stringency of the law with regard to kosher rules, sacrifices, and ways to dress. However, we have never been exempted from the main laws, the 10 commandments. As followers of Christ, the perfecter of the law, we are called to another dimension of action, emulators of him. With these thoughts tumbling in my mind the first thing I thought of was Micah 6:8:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

What the Lord requires of us? Three interdependent things. **To do justice.** Justice is a term we hear with regard to the courtroom and often nowhere else, but really synonyms for justice include *righteousness*—moral rightness. Certainly our judicial system is based on a moral code, and much of that moral code is based, in turn, upon the Torah and the 613 mitzvot. However, true justice extends beyond the courtroom to other parts of life. In fact we refer to God as righteous. We could then refer to God also as just(ice). How can we be just in our everyday lives? I can easily think of things such as returning a lost wallet, or a lost cell phone, to its rightful owner; pointing out errors on a bill that *benefit* you, or some such thing. But those don't happen every day. Or do they? Perhaps they happen more than you think, if you are looking. Pray that God opens your eyes to opportunities for actions of justice; you will be amazed at what you see.

To love kindness (some editions render *mercy*). I think we all can think more readily of these examples. Holding the door in a public place for someone with their hands full (whether it's with a walker or a screaming 2 year old); letting someone with less items go before you in line; offering a meal to someone who is homeless; offering a place to stay to a friend who has no income and no family to fall back on. Ways to be kind abound around us. Why don't we do them more then? Maybe because we do not *love* kindness. Of course we like it when people are kind to us, but do we *love* kindness enough to start the cause-effect, wonderful domino ourselves? Probably not. This is why God did not tell Micah to tell the Israelites to do justice and do kindness. It's easy to think of yourself as a kind person...and wait for someone to do kind things for you first. Perhaps you have heard the expression "Pay (or pass) it forward" where one only asks that someone repay a good deed by doing a good deed to someone else. I think this concept has roots that run deep in the consciousness of humans. Roots that entwine with those that give us

the concept of Tikkun Olam as well. Imagine how different this world could be if we each went out of our way (even a little) to practice a random act of mercy, of kindness, each day. Imagine how good it would make you feel as well. Imagine *loving* the act of kindness...and giving that gift to others.

Walk humbly with your God. Oh, the struggle of the human will against humility! How hard it is to be truly humble. We all find it hard, perhaps harder than acting justly and loving kindness. Truly seeking humility before God can be achieved through prayer, asking for the mindset of humility. Prayer itself reminds you that there is something greater, a creator and sustainer. This sense of the cosmic cannot help but make one feel humble, not to mention, the ability to *speak* directly to God is (or should be) a profoundly humbling experience. I also think humility can come from doing justice, and loving kindness. After all, it is hard to be prideful in the face of true gratitude, or when you are on the receiving end of either of those two unnatural acts. If you begin to give both, you will definitely begin to receive them as well. As you begin to incorporate more justice and kindness into your life, notice how your humility before God begins to develop as well. Doing these two things enables you to walk with God...and the only way to walk in the presence of the Creator is, after all, with utmost humility.

James 1:22-27 provides some sharp words for those who we would probably describe as hypocrites. But yet, perhaps that would be a bit of the speck in our bothers eye...and the log in our own.

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. 23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; 24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. 25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James makes it very clear that we not only need to study the word of God, but also act upon it. His examples of caring for the widows and orphans echo the words of the law and the prophets—what James and the early church had as scripture. This is the same message that the prophets themselves had been delivering to the Israelites hundreds of years before. It is not enough to observe ritual...you must act! Persevere in doing justice! Be kind to those who are in need (and we all are in need)! Remain unstained by this world. Be a light, an example, God's workers of repair—of Tikkun Olam—in the broken world.

I see Jesus as the perfect example of Tikkun Olam.

36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37 He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:36-40.

Jesus is the great repairer of the world. He came into a broken world. He did justice to the sick, the poor, women, children, men, friends and enemies. *That* is true justice: just action, despite social or natural deterrents. He *loved* mercy with every act of healing, every message of hope. And he *walked humbly* with God. How else could he go to the cross when his life was nothing but justice and mercy? Because of Tikkun Olam. He repaired the world in a way that no one else could, can or will. He died to provide a way for you and I to *do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God*. In fact, he called us to emulate him

in this pursuit. With such a perfect example, how could we do anything but try, at least in some small way, to incorporate Tikkun Olam into our own lives? Will you join me in making 2010 a year to repair our broken world?

“Pray as if everything depended on God.
Act as if everything depended on you.”

—*Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (2007)

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Or “Save us from the time of trial,” or “Do not bring us to the test,” in more modern translations, but what are we (or should we be) really praying for when we say the Lord’s Prayer? In this season of Epiphany, one of the traditional Gospel lessons is the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, told in detail by Matthew and Luke and in summary by Mark. The temptations in this story, and Jesus’ reaction to them help us to understand more fully. The first temptation, to turn the stones into bread, is the prototype of many temptations all of us face each day, to focus on satisfying our own needs (or desires) rather than relying on God, who knows far better than we what our true needs are, to give what is best for us, and asking Him “What are you calling me to do?”. Jesus’ response, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God,” quoting from Deut. 8:3, reminds us that even though we may be focused on the need that holds our immediate attention, God will care for all of our needs, as He understands them, leaving us free to follow Him unreservedly.

The second temptation (in Luke, third in Matthew) is to worship Satan in return for dominion over all the Earth. Again, it mirrors many of the temptations we face, to make something other than God (money, pleasure, power, etc.) the center of our existence. And again Jesus responds with a line from Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:13), “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.” In other words, stay focused on God, and trust in Him for everything else.

For the third temptation, Satan takes Jesus up to the highest point of the Temple and calls Him to throw Himself off, quoting from Psalm 91 that angels will bear Him up on their hands. This is in many ways the most insidious temptation of all, attempting to control God. And yet again, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:16), “Do not put the Lord your God to the test,” reminding us that God is always faithful; we are the ones who need to live up to His standards.

Living as a western missionary in Pakistan puts these temptations into a new perspective. Many of the things in our life in the US which we take for granted are not available, or difficult to find, or available in a significantly different form. It is very easy to get caught up in trying to live without bacon for breakfast, or with electricity that is off every other hour, or with a washing machine where the wash and spin cycles are in different tubs, requiring the clothes to be moved from one to the other in mid cycle, and forget that God has called us here and will provide for our needs.

This is also a country where the heritage of thousands of years of the Hindu caste system and its history under the British colonial administration have combined to produce a very hierarchical society, and a society in which westerners are automatically assumed to fit into the upper strata. With the deference and service which are hard to avoid, it is entirely too easy to begin to believe that we are something special and deserve the special treatment, and forget that we are here in Jesus’ name, not to be served, but to serve; not to have power over others, but to empower them for God’s service.

And finally, it is far too easy to fall into the mindset that since we are here, supposedly, in God’s service, that He somehow owes us something. We pray for what we think are the best outcomes in various situations, and feel hard done by if God chooses to answer our prayers in any other way. Our prayers become, not prayers of thanksgiving, or prayers of supplication, but prayers of demand.

As we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we need to remember that its first petition, “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,” should be the center of all our prayers, and the temptation we pray to avoid is the temptation to forget this.

Please pray with us for all who serve God in places far from their homes, that we may continue to trust in him and remember that our calling is as servants and witnesses.

Jerry Kabell

jkabell@fccollege.edu.pl

February Schedule

Monday, February 1

Tuesday, February 2

9:00 a.m. Plaid Door Check Writing

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, February 3

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, February 4

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley Clericus

at St. Alban's, Bay City

Friday, February 5

Saturday, February 6

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

Boy

Sunday, February 7

10:00 a.m. Christian Education

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

Monday, February 8

Tuesday, February 9

12:00 p.m. Commission on Ministry at

Diocesan Office

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, February 10

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, February 11

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

Friday, February 12

Saturday, February 13

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Blanket making

Workshop

Sunday, February 14

10:00 a.m. Christian Education

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

12:30 a.m. Vestry Meeting

Monday, February 15

7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley Convocation

at St. Alban's, Bay City

Tuesday, February 16

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Shrove Tuesday

Pancake Supper

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, February 17 Ash Wednesday

12:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist and

Imposition of Ashes

7:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist and

Imposition of Ashes

Thursday, February 18

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

Friday, February 19

Saturday, February 20

6:00 p.m. Candle Light Dinner

Sunday, February 21

10:00 a.m. Christian Education

11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

12:30 p.m. Episcopal Church Women

Monday, February 22

Tuesday, February 23

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, February 24

11:00 a.m. Bible Study

7:00 p.m. Lenten Study

Thursday, February 25

8:30 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

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

Friday, February 26

Saturday, February 27

Sunday, February 28

10:00 a.m. Christian Education

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

12:30 p.m. Daughters of the King

Business Meeting

Newsletter Ideas!!!

What would you think of a Sound Off column? A letters to the Editor column? Or a column for favorite recipes?

Put your ideas or contributions in the Newsletter box in the Narthex. Thank you!!!