



St. Mark's Epistle

February 2008

View from the Mountain...

"I invite you therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word."

***Book of Common Prayer,
Liturgy for Ash Wednesday***



Lent comes from the word "lencen," which means "to lengthen"—referring to that time of year when days begin to lengthen. For Christians, Lent is a 40-day period of fasting, penitence, and preparation for the festival of Easter. Since every Sunday is a "little Easter," celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord, Sundays remain feast days, even during the Lenten season.

The season begins on Ash Wednesday when people are marked with ashes prepared from the burning of last year's blessed palms. Ashes have long been associated with repentance and amendment of life. Lent ends after sundown on the Saturday before Easter Sunday, at the Great Vigil of Easter service. In the early church, Lent was the time of preparation for the Easter baptism of converts to the Christian faith. It followed a lengthy and intensive preparation period--usually three years! The liturgical color for lent is usually purple or, in some parishes, a Lenten array of unbleached linen trimmed in red and black. Flowers are generally omitted from the altar and weddings are not scheduled.

Lent is a season offered to us by the Church to re-order our priorities. It is a time for letting go of practices and attitudes that hinder our growing closer to God and one another. It is an opportunity to adopt

and make part of our lives those things that set us apart as Christian people. Many people like to be intentional about giving to those less fortunate than ourselves and taking on new spiritual disciplines. It is a time to try to make strides toward being the person God has called us to be in practice and in attitude.

As a gathered community, the parish of St. Mark's Church will experience this Lenten journey in a very particular way this year. On the first Sunday of Lent, February 10th, we will begin worshipping at the 9:00 am hour rather than in two separate worship services (8 & 10 am). Although we have gathered as a whole parish at special times of the year, such as on Mother's Day and for the day of the Annual Meeting, this is a new, intentional practice for our parish which will continue as we move through the church year. Although this change in worship practice may feel strange and unfamiliar at first, there is a general consensus that our parish is ready for this sign of unity as the body of Christ.

It's important for us to recognize that our parish has not been a static institution, but a living, breathing organism that has expanded, changed and made many adaptations through the years. We began as a bi-lingual congregation, with English and German the spoken languages in worship. For many years the early Sunday worship service was conducted in German, with a choir that sang German choral music. In time, as the church and life of the Adams community changed, German speaking was dropped and other practices took precedence. With the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, the identity of the early worship service was centered on Rite I, non-music, and the later worship service has been the Rite II service, with music. Unlike the 8 am service which has remained, for more than ten years, as a homogeneous, stable, group of people, the later service has experienced more deeply the shifts and

changes in the parish: the greater exodus of membership leaving the parish, the loss of musical support from an organist and choir, and the effects of the Sunday School's ebb and flow upon the life of the parish. Even though these experiences are seriously considered by the parish leadership, the most critical issue is living into our desire to be a vibrant, alive group with the common mission of sharing the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit to a world that is broken and in need of God's healing, transforming grace. And so, now is the season to make this shift in how we orient ourselves to form and shape us more fully into Christ's body.

Initiating this change during the Lenten season offers us metaphors that will help us in our personal and communal pilgrimage: the wilderness temptation story, the journey to Jerusalem, the discovery of the way to renewal, the call to sacrificial giving, the way of the cross, and servanthood. Like all pilgrimages, we know our goal (which is to be more fully embodied in Christ) but we don't know exactly what will happen on the journey, who we will meet, and just how we will be as persons and a community when we come to the journey's completion. The irony of this journey, however, is that at the end is God's great surprise: resurrection. Our great hope is that we are, even now, being born into new life—renewed to continue on the journey. And for this we can say, "**Behold your Church walking once more the pilgrim way...**"

~Rev. Ellen

Sunday Worship Schedule...

Beginning Lent I, February 10, 2008

9:00 am Worship
9:00 am Children's Sunday School (children entering into the worship space at the time of the passing of the peace)

Coffee Fellowship follows the worship service

10:30 am Adult Christian Formation Class(es)

Bi-weekly classes (alternating):

Youth Catechism/Anglican Voices: Spirituality in the Anglican Tradition (a class for aspiring members, seekers, and those just interested in the featured topic)

Youth Group News...

Over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend, the youth group participated in a murder mystery overnight at Camp Bement. It was a lot of fun, we ate pizza, watched a movie on Sunday and were off on a scavenger hunt after breakfast on Monday morning. It's a good thing most of the items on our list could be found inside since it was extremely cold outside! Afterward, we broke into small groups to discuss our feelings on religion. It was great fun and we'd do it all again if the weather was warmer!

It wasn't all fun and games, however, we planned our list of projects for the coming year. Our next event is a Pasta & Dessert Celebration on February 3.

This is our first attempt at a dinner which we are planning to make an annual event. If you weren't able to join us this year, make a note to save the Sunday before Ash Wednesday for next year!

~Joann Delisle

Relay for Life 2008...

Joann, Nancy and I just attended the kickoff meeting for the 2008 Relay for Life. The event is scheduled for May 30 & 31st at Noel Field in North Adams. I am writing to ask for your support in joining the Youth Group again this year. St. Mark's Marches is registered on the Relay for Life.org website. The link to our page is:

http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife/RelayForLifeNewEnglandDivision?team_id=206876&pg=team&fr_id=7280. Through this link you can register to join the team or direct others to make on-line donations. Our first meeting will be held on February 10 immediately following the worship service. There are new and exciting things happening with the relay this year, including the opportunity to participate in the Cancer Research Study 3 (CRS3) for those who have had cancer touch their lives through loved ones.

It's pretty simple from what we've seen, a survey is filled out, waist measurement taken, along with a couple vials of blood. It takes about half an hour and will go on during the relay. The first study was done in the 50s, the second in the 80s, and now Northern Berkshire has been selected as one of the participating sites this year. We hope you will join us again and help St. Mark's Marchers raise even more money to fight cancer this year!

~Carol Tetlow

Knit & Stitch/Leprosy Mission...

The Knit 'n Stitch group ran into bad weather during the past two months, along w/Monday holidays, so we weren't able to meet as often. We have received a gift of all new yarn from Catherine Snow, to whom we send a very special Thank You! Without the support of these gifts, we would be producing less items. Please note that our meeting time has changed to 2 pm on Monday afternoon, due to the shorter daylight hours. In December we sent 13 hats, 3 pair of socks, 5 pair of gloves, 12 scarves, 8 pair of mittens, and 1 pair of slippers to help the homeless.

A package of cancelled stamps weighing in at 1 lb. 14 oz. was shipped off to the Leprosy Mission. That's a lot of stamps when you stop to think of how small the stamps really are! Thank you to everyone for helping us keep this project going.

~Barbara Fiske

A Note from the Editor...

When you submit items to me for the Epistle, please send it to me via e-mail in plain text without any formatting other than paragraphs. I will see that it is laid out properly with appropriate spacing, etc. in the body of the *Epistle*. Thanks, in advance, for your help!

My e-mail address is: k.j.deordio@mcla.edu.

~Karen DeOrdio

Hi-Lites from the Annual Meeting...

St. Mark's Parish Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, January 13, 2008. Jean Palano was elected as Clerk of the meeting by those present.

Vestry Nominations: It was suggested the number of vestry members be lowered to six for the year 2008, plus the Executive Committee. A motion was made and seconded to elect a six person vestry and vote again at the 2009 meeting to keep the number at six or raise it again to 9. The vote was unanimous.

Election of Officers & New Vestry Members: The new vestry members and officers elected are: JoAnn Gagne and Sylvia Lefebvre, vestry members with Fred Nicholaev, Sr. Warden, Frank Palano, Jr. Warden, Carole Tetlow, Treasurer, and Nancy Main, Assistant Treasurer. The continuing vestry members are: Christine Emerson, Joann Delisle, Terry Molleur and Michele Pause.

Delegates to Diocesan Convention and Deanery are JoAnn Gagne and Fred Nicholaev with Mike and Terry Molleur as Alternates.

Rev. Ellen announced that her contract as Priest-in-Charge has been extended from 3 to 4 years. She also announced that beginning February 10th, St. Mark's would be having only one Sunday worship service beginning at 9:00 am in an attempt to bring the parish together as a larger group since our numbers are so small. After much discussion about the pros and cons of this idea, the majority present felt it was for the good of our parish.

Fred Nicholaev, Senior Warden echoed Rev. Ellen's thoughts about change being a healthy move for the parish. New energy and strength will grow us together. We are already doing great things-the child-oriented service has brought us new families-our mission ministry, our service to others, just to name a few. Fred asked everyone to pray for St. Mark's and its future.

Stewardship: JoAnn Gagne reported that the stewardship team was planning to raise awareness on stewardship this year with 5 programs through the year: 1. A doctor to speak on Alzheimer's Disease; 2. A worship to help young adults or anyone with their finances; 3. A "Five Wishes: Aging with Dignity" workshop; 4. "What You Need to Know to Protect Your Life's Savings"; and 5. An environmental stewardship program. They are also planning at least two fund-raisers for the coming year.

Budget: Carol Tetlow reported that another \$50,000 will be taken out from funds held with the Trustees of the Diocese. We asked for 15% increase in pledges this year and received an average 9% increase. The FY08 budget was reviewed and accepted as presented.

The final item on the agenda was the commissioning of Wardens, Officers, Members of the Vestry and Delegates/Alternates to Diocesan Convention and Deanery.

~Jean Palano, Clerk