



# St. Mark's Epistle

March/April 2010

## *Ponderings from Fr. Ed...*

Within our congregations, we are confronted by challenges as great as we have ever known. Many people are at a loss to understand how to address the challenges - identifying and responding to the challenges we face.

Evangelism is a ministry that if understood properly, can assist us in identifying strategies for recognizing, engaging resources, and addressing these challenges in order to move us forward into becoming healthy, vibrant communities of faith, and inheritors of God's promised future.

There are many resources available to help us. I would like to offer a framework that comes by way of our Presbyterian friends and some other mainline denominations. Perhaps it can be a starting point.

Let's ponder some definitions.

*Evangelism* comes from a Greek word found in the New Testament and means sharing good news. Most of us enjoy sharing good news, whether of a child's birth, a job promotion, a marriage etc.

Likewise, many of us enjoy telling others about a good restaurant, a good movie, or a great book we just read.

*The Good News* is centered on the salvation, which is found in Jesus Christ. In the Great Commission, Christians are called by Jesus to "go and make disciples of all people." (Matthew 28:19)

We are called to share our faith and the good news of God's love for us in Jesus. This happens both inside and outside the church.

Evangelism is meeting people in situations where the Gospel (good news) is given the opportunity to change them. Two working definitions of Evangelism that I have found helpful are:

1. Welcoming the stranger.
2. One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

Evangelism is sharing the hope and hospitality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Church growth* is the increase in worship attendance that can happen when people hear the good news and respond with acts of discipleship to Christ and his Church.

*Mission* involves all aspects of the work of Christ's church. It is everything the church does in God's name. Our church's mission is to carry on the ministry that Jesus began over 2,000 years ago. *Ministry* is another name for mission, and *stewardship* is the care-taking of it all.

*Faith sharing* is a three-way conversation between a faith-seeker, a faith-sharer, and God, in which personal experiences of God are shared.

*Witnessing* is sharing your own faith story. All is in the context of *holy conversation*.

*Conversion* happens when someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ. It is the activity of the Holy Spirit.

*Relational evangelism* is sharing the good news of God with another person or with a small group of people. This can happen when we share our faith with friends, relatives, neighbors, and business associates. It is witnessing in word and action to the transforming love of God in Christ, with integrity and compassion in the personal, church, and the public realms of our lives.

The first step in an evangelism strategy is to consider our congregations and ask these questions:

What will new people and visitors find when they visit our churches? Are our facilities inviting? Does our signage help people find their way? Is it up-to-date? Do we greet people warmly, or do we behave like mimes at the door? Are we experiencing conflict - open or under the surface? Do we have healthy self-esteem? Do members build up rather than tear down their church, the staff, and other members? Do we have a vision of where we are going? Are we a warm and welcoming community of Christ? Do we follow up on our welcoming with personal contacts? What would our local community miss most if our church ceased to exist? What is needed for church growth?

The second step is to prepare the field for growth. How can we support and make our leadership (clergy and laity) more effective? How can we plan for God's vision to be achieved, and to set expectations for ourselves and for our churches? What challenges do we face? What challenges do we deny?

Moving from maintenance to mission:

The congregation must move beyond a survival mentality to the openness of ministry and community outreach by: Developing a vision for the future. Resolving power and territorial conflicts, whether between individuals or cliques. Increasing money and resources and improving the stewardship of those already committed to the church. Overcoming poor self-esteem and apathy. Expanding our circle of concern and friendship to include outsiders. What happens in church should not always stay in church!

Finally, a congregation's climate must change. When a church can be more open to more people and new ideas, congregational self-esteem can be improved, and fear of change and risk-taking can be overcome. Even failure can be accepted as a way to discover new and more God-directed options.

Each congregation is unique and presents different challenges. Every church has its own particular culture, congregational system, and community context.

The potential for evangelism and church growth in every congregation depends on the grace of God and

the gifts, faith, cooperation, and commitment of its members. It also depends on the health of the culture and system, and the possibilities presented by the community.

I believe, that with God's help, we can live out our faith more effectively, and confront the challenges we face. Will you try these steps?

~Fr. Ed+

### *A Vestry Minute...*

At the February meeting of St. Mark's Vestry, the following decisions were made:

While we are swapping service locations back and forth between St. Mark's and St. John's, all services including Saturdays will be held at the same location.

During the month of March, all services will be held at St. Mark's, Adams including Easter Sunday.

During Advent 2010, all services will be held at St. John's, North Adams.

Sylvia Lefebvre shared her views on merging, her bottom line was to get on with it and move forward! We had a lengthy discussion following her thoughts, with the consensus being that merging was a good idea. However, we are stuck in limbo until both Vestries vote to merge! Once this decision is made, we will be able to form various committees composed of members from both parishes to work on the details. Following the discussion the following motion was made:

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that we merge w/St. John's and become one parish.

VOTE: 9 in favor, 1 abstention.

Brian Grande presented the Vestry with a photo inventory of our various sacred objects and other possessions, along w/negatives and a CD. A heartfelt thank you to Brian for all his painstaking work.

~Karen DeOrdio, Clerk

### *Holy Week...*

Service information for Holy Week will be included in our coming Sunday bulletins and posted on the front doors of St. Mark's and St. John's churches.

### *Easter Memorials...*

Donations are being accepted for Easter Memorials until Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup> (last and final date if you want to have your donation in the published listing). Please clearly write your name and the person(s) for whom the donation is given in memory or honor, and send them to:

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
PO Box 191  
Adams, MA 01220

OR

St. John's Episcopal Church  
Summer Street  
North Adams, MA 01247

You may also place your envelope in the alms basin on any Sunday before Easter.



### *Annual Easter Egg Hunt...*

The Saints will be sponsoring their fourth annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday April 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2:00 to 4:00 in St. Mark's Parish House. The hunt is open to all the children (grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends) of our parishes.

The event will include lunch (macaroni and cheese and chicken nuggets), decorate your own sugar cookies, a movie and the egg hunt.

There is a signup sheet in the back of the church and one in the parish house.

We request that all children are signed up so that we can ensure enough treats for everyone (we would hate to not have something for everyone!). Headcount needed by Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. Also, if your child has any food allergies, please advise us so that we can also accommodate them in meals and treats.

Donations toward the purchase of candy and treats are also appreciated.

Any questions, please contact Carol Tetlow ([crt0524@yahoo.com](mailto:crt0524@yahoo.com)) or any of the youth group members.

### *St. Mark's Vestry Members, 2010...*

Senior Warden: JoAnn Gagne: 743-5859  
Junior Warden: Nancy Main: 743-4695  
Clerk: Karen DeOrdio: 663-8061  
Treasurer: Carol Tetlow: 743-0787  
Ann Grande: 413-346-8884  
Brian Johnson: 743-9388  
Sylvia Lefebvre: 743-2241  
Pat Linscott: 743-9886  
Leeann Martin: 743-0787

If you have questions regarding anything that is going on at St. Mark's, feel free to contact any Vestry member! Fr. Ed is available by calling our local number: 743-0947...calls are forwarded to his office in North Adams. If he is not in, leave a message and he will return your call. His days off are Monday and Tuesday.

### *St. John's/St. Mark's Open Forum – Feb. 14, 2010*

#### **Collated Thoughts from Post-it notes, in response to the question: Where is God leading us?**

At the parish meeting on Valentine's Day we were asked to write our thoughts about merging on pieces of paper which were then posted on the wall at St. John's. Below are the results of that request:

I feel that God is leading us (all of us!) to merge at this time - (for obvious reasons).

1+1 = 1

The 2 churches are forming a union like a marriage. It is time to set the wedding date and become one family.

To Be One bread, One Body

- Stop reinventing the wheel - Listen to each other - Time to move forward with the merge.

I feel that the merger should be made as soon as possible. In answer to the question, God is everywhere.

God is leading us to become a more mission minded church - I believe the best way to do that is to merge.

Unite, Plan, think. Move forward. Change the world, for good things.

Strive to tithe and great things will happen.

God is leading us to work together, St. Mark's and St. John's, for the good of both churches.

United we Stand

God leading us to: Become aware of the work there is to do around us...hunger...poverty...fear

- form a closer, caring community of Christians to provide for our spiritual growth and welfare  
- come together in joyful worship anywhere that works

"Git - R - Dun"

To a Merger of one Church.

Keep Working Together!

God is directing us to join in prayer on Sundays.

We have the choice to continue on as two struggling churches experiencing a slow death or merge together and become one healthy, more financially secure church.

I wish I knew!

Not sure! He is worried about us losing people.

Hopefully, God is leading us in the right direction.

I feel we have to make these necessary changes in order for both churches to survive down the road. Bless both vestries for doing a wonderful job! I hope these problems can get resolved soon. My prayers to all.

I think God is leading us to go forward and all [be]come one.

God is directing us to come back to him as one stronger congregation to love and worship him in a new and stronger way.

Together we can make a difference. Alone - we cannot.

I'm not sure.

I wish to see the two churches merge! From what I have seen or heard it seems to be God is directing us in this direction.

Get Together

Merge!! Don't Delay! Let the Vestries Lead!

Together - Always

To Follow Him with Faith

I want to merge and I believe God wants us to also.

Unification Healthy Congregations

If we are forced to choose one building over the other, the original members of that church should do as much as possible to make sure the others feel like family and not guests.

I believe that God is leading us toward a merger. My faith in God is strong and I know it will be possible with his guidance. Which building is used will eventually be decided with his guidance. I whole heartedly endorse the merger.

God is leading us to merge and become a stronger more vibrant congregation.

The 2 churches should merge. Yes it will be hard, but honestly would you think it would be easy? And it

doesn't matter which church. We don't get together every Sunday to worship a church, but we worship the Lord.

Merge ASAP

I wish for God's peace of mind, heart and body for each member of St. Mark's and St. John's. This will lead us to listen to God's direction and treat one another with much love and respect.

### *An Invitation...*

St. John's Episcopal Church, Williamstown, is welcoming visitors to view artist-inspired Stations of the Cross. These fresh, bold, imaginative interpretations of Good Friday, the last day in the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, employ painting, sculpture, fabric, and photography, and invite viewers to consider what may be a familiar story in new and sensory ways.

Stations of the Cross have a long history in Christianity. Modeled on the experience of earliest pilgrims who traveled to Jerusalem to visit sites associated with the arrest and execution of Jesus of Nazareth, visual images of those events have long appeared in churches to bring home the significance of the crucifixion of Christ as narrated in the four Gospels. The popularity of such stations grew in the Middle Ages.

Those traditional fourteen Stations of the Cross have, in turn, inspired fourteen artists—and teams of young artists—associated with St. John's Parish. On each of the fourteen window sills in the church on Park Street stands a fresh interpretation of one of the stations, created by one—or several—of the artists who accepted the invitation of the congregation's pastor, The Rev. Peter Elvin, and parishioner Laurie Glover, to take part in an innovative approach to the Lenten season.

Paving this contemporary approach to the Way of the Cross in 2008 and 2009, Glover invited several women in the parish to join her in using "found objects" to create installations that engaged the imagination of viewers. This year's display has expanded the number, gender, age-range, and media of participating artists.

Their works can be viewed any day between now and Good Friday, April 2, between the hours of 9:00 a. m. and 4:30 p.m. The church will be fully lit, allowing best viewing, between noon and 2:00 p.m. weekdays.

Information: 413-458-8144.

## *Music Ministry Notes...*

Lent really is my favorite season of the year. Most people see the season as kind of a downer. It is penitential, you're supposed to fast and sacrifice, and it is still cold out. Our worship centers on some of the deepest and most profound mysteries of our faith. You start to wonder this time of year if you'll ever see the sun again!

For me, out of these dark times come some of the most beautiful music in the world which seems to reach down into our souls and rigorously stir up sometimes unpleasant emotions. Then, miraculously, the heat of our humble tears melts the cold doubt in our hearts, clears our eyes and **we know** once again, that the Son will shine.

Come help us worship this Lent and Easter with special music from the Senior Choir and Hand bell Choirs:\*\*\*

March 28 - Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

April 1 - Maundy Thursday

April 2 - Good Friday (Stations of the Cross?)

April 3 - The Great Easter Vigil

April 4 - Easter - The Sunday of the Resurrection

\*\*\*Please insert correct times and places

Don't forget to read the second part of my article on Psalm Singing in this issue! (see below)

God Bless,

~Lee Warren Rutan

## *So, if we are supposed to sing the psalms, how do we do it?*

This is part two of a two part series on psalm singing. The first; "Why Should We Sing Psalms?" appeared in the January newsletter.

We don't really know exactly how the ancient Hebrews sang the psalms. It is believed that there was a strong oral tradition, and that the original Hebrew alphabet contained indications of the melodies. Over the centuries Christians have developed many traditions. Chanting the psalms is the principal and preferred method, because chanting preserves the integrity of the texts. However, chanting can be difficult, even in its simplest forms, and is often unfamiliar and too complicated for most congregations.

Urged on by our church leaders, I have been working hard over the past year to introduce psalm singing to our congregation. Since we started, we have learned several different forms of psalms settings. These include **Plainsong chant, Anglican Chant, Simplified Anglican Chant, Chant with congregational refrain, and Metrical Psalms.**

In all forms that include *chanting*, the original text of the psalm (or canticle) is marked in a special way called "pointing" which indicates how singers fit the words into

a specific melodic formula. **Anglican chant** is a form unique to the Episcopal-Anglican tradition and particularly challenging yet beautiful. Even with proper instruction, trained choirs find singing Anglican chant difficult, and our choir is to be applauded for learning and singing all four forms of chant mentioned above.

Unfortunately, it is impractical to teach an entire congregation to sing Anglican chant. It is certainly appropriate for the congregation to enjoy their efforts by simply listening attentively. Following the text of the psalm printed in the weekly bulletin as the choir sings Anglican chant can greatly enrich your understanding and appreciation.

A very old tradition in singing throughout all cultures in every corner of the earth is *antiphonal singing*, or "call and response." This is where a leader or the choir sings verses, and the congregation sings familiar refrains that emphasize the theme of the psalm or canticle. When we sing from *A HymnTune Psalter* during our services, the choir sings the verses in **simplified Anglican chant**, and the congregation sings a **refrain (antiphon)** that is set to a line of a familiar hymn. This style of psalm singing is the *most popular style used in churches today*

Most hymnals contain some **metrical psalms**. These are psalms, or portions of psalms that have been reworded in a rhyming pattern so that they may be sung to familiar hymn tunes. Although these are much easier for congregations to sing, sometimes the lectionary contains psalm or canticle selections that are too long to fit reasonably into a hymn setting, and they fall short in preserving the original text. Our primary hymnal, *The Hymnal 1982*, contains approximately 30 settings of 20 different psalms in metrical form. We have also just purchased *The New Metrical Psalter*, which takes *all* of the psalm and canticle selections from the Revised Common Lectionary, and rewords them into metrical psalms. It then gives suggestions of hymns from our hymnal to which the words may be sung. With artful choice of tunes, metrical psalms can be an easy effective way to get congregations to sing hymns.

It is true that this can be confusing and time consuming, but learning to sing psalms and canticles in our liturgies is well worth the time and effort and makes our worship and praise more meaningful. We will not sing the psalms or canticles at *every* service, but use them during special Sundays and seasons. Indeed, the seasons of Lent and Easter are a great time to include lots of psalms singing! We will alternate styles and forms so as to include the congregation when possible. As they say, singing is praying twice!

~Lee Warren Rutan