

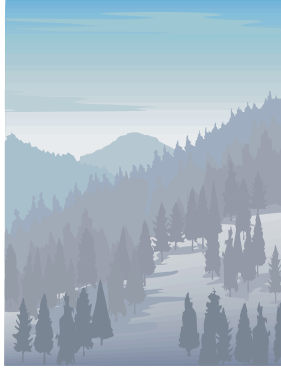


St. Mark's Epistle

June/July 2008

View from the Mountain...

One of the things I have learned, which is at the core of my philosophy of change, is that people do not want to be changed - they want to be blessed. Blessing permeates the presence of God in the world, this creation, and the way Jesus defines ways of being in the Kingdom of God.



The Sermon on the Mount's beatitudes are about the way a person centers his or her life so that the divine life is manifested. Blessing by its very nature is not contained, but demands to be passed on. By approaching life in the parish through the lens of blessing, others are truly seen as valuable, worthy, and a gift that has come our way. In blessing one another as an intentional spiritual practice, we recognize that we are not here for self, or for others, but rather we are here for God.

When I was ordained as a priest, I requested an additional action by my bishop - the anointing with oil and his blessing upon my hands. The unction of my hands was an extremely powerful experience in a service already filled with awesome affirmation and joy. The blessing of my hands was to remind me that much of who I am and what I am about is blessing. Through the years blessing has shaped my self-understanding as I enter into the life of a parish as a co-partner and companion on the journey.

At our May 15th Vestry meeting, we engaged in a time of naming those blessings we have received over the past couple of years. There was a richness of appreciation for the variety of gifts that are being offered up for the common good and there was a sense of the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit as we went deeper into conversation over an issue I'd asked the

Vestry and Officers to contemplate before gathering for the monthly meeting.

During the past several weeks I'd spoken privately with parish leaders about the schedule of monthly activities. We had a lively and insightful discussion, out of which was voiced a common desire that the norm for the parish would be to schedule events for times other than Sunday afternoons and evenings. We jointly recognized that the natural pattern for fellowship is at the Sunday morning Coffee Hour, rather than later in the day. We believe that our emphasizing this time for table fellowship and hospitality would have a positive effect within the life of the parish. We are, essentially, claiming a "holy longing" for Sabbath keeping, the practice of simplicity of life, and a need to rest in the blessing of God - a blessing we take with us from our worship, into the world. Although there will be occasions for Sunday afternoon and evening gatherings, I think just this one shift in our parish practices will go a long way in giving us a renewed sense of God's good gift of rest, rebirth, restoration and living joyfully into God's preferred future with the risen Christ.

Ellen+

Quotes from, "Keeping Sabbath" in Practicing Our Faith, by Dorothy C. Bass

"Most often, Sundays will make the best Sabbaths, and not only because our schedules are relatively open on that day. Joining the assembly of Christians for the celebration of Word and sacrament reminds us that Sabbath keeping is not about taking a day off but about being recalled to our knowledge of and gratitude for God's activity in creating the world, and giving liberty to captives, and overcoming the powers of

death. In addition, the friends with whom we worship can help us learn to rest and rejoice once the service is over."

"Overworked Americans need rest, and they need to be reminded that they do not cause the grain to grow and that their greatest fulfillment does not come through the acquisition of material things. Moreover, the planet needs a rest from human plucking and burning and buying and selling. Perhaps, as Sabbath keepers, we will come to live and know these truths more fully, and thus to bring their wisdom to the common solution of humanity's problems."

"We all need to remember that Sunday worship is not just about "going to church"; it is about taking part in the activity by which God is shaping a new creation. It is a foretaste of the feast to come."

A Little Number from the Senior Warden...

My curiosity was peaked the other day, when a parishioner told me that it seems like the number of people attending the 9:00 am Sunday service was smaller than the total Sunday attendance when we had the 8:00 and 10:30 services. I've been keeping track of attendance numbers ever since I've been Senior Warden,,, plugging in the numbers from the Service Register to an Excel spreadsheet so that they can be "sliced and diced" and sorted if we need specific information. (I've actually gone back as far as 1996). The spreadsheet does the math so that makes it easier when we have to complete the Parochial Report.

To be honest, I had not entered information into the spreadsheet since the end of March '08. So, I got the few needed numbers from the Service Register, plugged them in and this is what I found:

For this calendar year, we have experienced a 13% increase in Sunday attendance since we went over to the one service at 9:00 AM! Palm Sunday and Easter were not included in the calculations as those numbers are always higher than usual and would have skewed the results. It does include, however, those several Sunday's following Easter where we normally see low attendance figures. Attendance has been on the rise since mid April and the past several weeks have surpassed all previous Sundays this calendar year, barring Palm Sunday and Easter of course. Speaking of Palm Sunday and Easter: This year we

experienced a 30% increase in attendance on Palm Sunday over last year and a 22% increase in attendance on Easter over last year. For the period beginning 2/10/08 (when we went over to the 9:00 service) and ending 5/11/08, we had an average Sunday attendance of 55.8. For the same time period last year, when we had the two services, we had an average Sunday attendance of 52.8. To me, attendance appears to be increasing... slowly, but increasing none the less. I also see that going over to the one service at 9:00 has not had a detrimental effect on our attendance numbers. If anything, they have increased. Granted, the sample is small and we need more data over a longer period of time to be statistically significant, but you have to admit, at first blush a 13% increase ain't bad.

Now, here's the most important calculation, how are we, as a parish, as a community of Christians, as a part of the Body of Christ since we went over to the one service? We can't measure this like we can measure numbers of people, but I do sense a stronger, more coherent and focused parish. People are getting to know one another, relate to one another. There is a sense of vibrancy, life and energy at services that was missing for a while. There is a developing sense of ownership and of community. To me, it seems we are getting stronger in our coming together as the Body of Christ, which is what we are all called to do,,, but who's counting?

Shalom,
Fred Nicholaev
Senior Warden

Each Week in our Parish...

Sunday, 9 am: Worship with Holy Eucharist
Children's Faith Formation

10:30 am: Youth Catechism Class (following the coffee fellowship on alternating Sundays)

Monday, 2 pm: Knit 'n Stitch Prayer Ministry*

Wednesday, 9:30 am: Morning Worship at the Millhouses in Adams

Wednesday, 6:30 pm: "Lectionary Bible Study"

June 4th will be the last meeting 'til fall.

*in the Parish House

Coming Events...

Saturday, June 7, St. Mark's "Spring into Summer Festival:" On this day we will host a celebration of spring and coming summer season. As a fund raiser for the parish, we will feature a sale of plants; baked breads, cakes, pies & pastries; a "Chance Auction" (otherwise known as a Chinese auction); quilt raffle; arts & crafts; food & drink; and activities for children.

Tuesday, June 17th: Alzheimer's Workshop, Free and open to the public, 7 pm in the Parish House.

Sunday, June 29: St. Mark's Patronal Feast Day Service, 9:00 am followed by the Annual Parish Picnic - Rev. Ellen invites everyone, members of the parish & friends, to join her at the Rectory at/or after 11:30 am. The Rectory is located at 805 Savoy Rd, Cheshire (Rt. 116). Bring a covered-dish or two to share. There will be a few chairs, but suggest you bring lawn chairs or rug to sit on. Hamburgers, hotdogs, and sausages will be on the grill. Let's hope for beautiful weather!!!

August 10, 2008: St. Mark's/St. John's joint service & picnic. Joe DeOrdio is representing St. Mark's, and is looking for an additional volunteer or two to help with the planning of this event. Several locations are currently being investigated. If you are interested in helping, speak to Joe after Sunday service or call him at 663-8061. Look for additional details in the Sunday bulletins!

Transitions in our Parish....

Confirmed by Bishop Scruton on May 1, 2008:

Kathy Dimitropolis
Kimberly Slaving

Received by Bishop Scruton on May 1, 2008:

Brian and Ann Grande

Transfer of Membership from St. Mark's:

Nancy & Wayne Lillie

Transfer of Membership TO St. Mark's:

Pam & Russ Duval

Alzheimer's Disease: What, Who, How?

Unfortunately, many of us have a friend or family member who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. There are so many questions about this disease: What exactly is Alzheimer's? What are the

symptoms? Is it hereditary? How fast does it progress? What are the stages? What progress are they making toward a cure?

If you are interested in the answers to these and other questions please join us for a seminar on Alzheimer's Disease to be presented by your Stewardship Committee.. Our guest speaker will be Beth Hinkley Moogan and we will meet at St Mark's Parish House at 7 PM on Tuesday June 17th. Look for more information in your church bulletins and on posters that will be distributed.

~ JoAnn Gagne,
Stewardship Committee



Tea Party...

Our first tea party was such a huge success, we are planning on having another one in the fall. Including ourselves, twenty-one ladies of varying ages attended this event. It was a lot of fun taking out the china tea cups, the lace table cloth and the tea set. We would like to thank Carol and JoAnn, our youth group leaders, who helped us with the baking, setting and cleaning up. They also donated all the different teas. Thanks also to Michele Pause for remembering to bring her camera when we forgot ours; the pictures are great.

~Amanda Delisle & Lee Ann Martin

Vestry Hi-Lites...

At the May 15th meeting of the Vestry Rev. Ellen asked us to review what we thought were blessings in the past two years and here are a few: having Rev. Ellen here as our priest-in-charge, our Sunday School, young peoples group, the young women who hosted the Mother's Day Tea Party, worship at the Millhouses, Knit'n Stitch Prayer Ministry, Girl's Nite Out, our new members, individual spiritual growth, Wednesday nite Bible Study. We often are so busy taking care of the business of the Parish that we forget to count our many blessings!

The Vestry adopted a new policy to help guide us as we plan and put events on the parish calendar. Events to be supported by the parish need to be presented to the Vestry prior to being placed on the calendar. Here's the information that the Vestry would like to have:

- * Who is sponsoring the event?
(e.g. mission/Outreach, Congregational Care, Sunday School)
- * How many people are on-board and how many more do you need to help?
- * What date is being requested for the Parish Calendar?
- * How much will it cost and where are the funds to come from?

The Vestry will also be assessing and evaluating events as completed. **This is intended to help us monitor our activities and events as well as the number of volunteers our activities require.**

~Karen DeOrdio, Clerk



Congratulations to our Graduates:

McCann Technical High School

Daniel Celentano
Matthew Main
Matthew Millard

Adams Memorial Middle School

Brendon Tetlow

Berkshire Community College

Joshua Malloy

Enjoy a smile or giggle...

Thank God for church ladies with typewriters. These sentences appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services ... probably 40-50 years ago ... they been around a long time ... and, yes, they still make me chuckle; hope you get at least one more chuckle, too.

- The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes snacks & meals.
- The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on Water."
The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."
- Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 PM in the > Christian Life Center. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.

Financial Report...

At the end of April, our spending was \$1,615 over budget. This deficit is primarily due to unpaid pledges of \$2,208 representing about half of our pledging households. The shortfall has been slightly offset with the receipt of unpledged income totaling \$1017. We had an additional shortfall in our budgeted income from the investments held at the Diocese. We are fortunate that we have been able to keep the deficit fairly low.

Income

Current Month	\$19,770
Budget YTD	\$61,976
Current YTD	\$58,345
Over/Under YTD	(\$3,520)

Expenses

Current Month	\$13,760
Budget YTD	\$55,377
Current YTD	\$53,472
Over/Under YTD	(\$1,905)

Surplus/Deficit

Current Month	\$6,010
Budget YTF	\$6,599
Current YTD	\$4,984
Over/Under YTD	(\$1,615)

If you have any questions/concerns about this financial report, please call Carol Tetlow or e-mail her at crt0524@yahoo.com.

~Carol Tetlow, Treasurer



June 22nd is the last day of Sunday School. I can hardly believe it's almost here. It has been a very busy and enjoyable year. On September 7th the new Sunday School year will begin, but there's work to be done before we begin teaching *Godly Play* to the children.

~Jo Ann Delisle

"Three Simple Rules", Workshop Update...

- 1) Spend less than you earn.
- 2) Save now! Buy later.
- 3) Know your debt.

From the feedback I have received, the workshop was very successful. Some participants said they were familiar with most of the information presented but thought it was good to get back to basics. We were introduced to a young Christian couple who made a series of common financial errors. Then we went through the process of identifying those mistakes and learning how the couple was able to get back on track to a better financial situation. To help ourselves, we were given worksheets so we could do our own "Financial Physical" which included a Personal Cash Flow Plan and a Personal Asset & Debt Inventory. This was the most enlightening part for most attendees.

All in all it was a very successful workshop. Our sincere thanks goes out to Bob Norcross, a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in North Adams, for the gift of his time and talent which made it possible for us to have the workshop presented at our parish.

~JoAnn Gagne
Stewardship Committee



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Spring-into-Summer Festival

Saturday, June 7

9:30am – 2:00pm

Plant Sale Bake Sale Chance Auctions

Food & Drinks Arts & Crafts

Raffles: Afghan/ Garden Basket / Quilt_

Community Support & Resources

Adams Fire Department

Childcare of the Berkshires

Northern Berkshire Family Net

Target Hunger

Opportunities for Enrollment

WIC & Food Stamps

Mobile Health Van providing

Free Blood Pressure Check

To Enroll in Mass Health Insurance, bring MA

Photo ID/Driver's License

Birth Certificate or Passport

*Two recent pay stubs or copy of 2007 Tax
Return*

For Information Call Parish Office 413-743-0947