

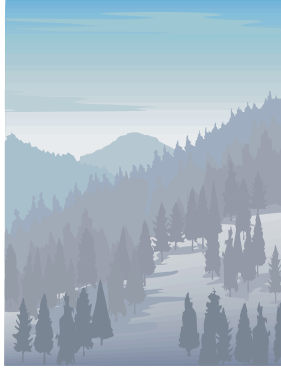


St. Mark's Epistle

August 2008

View from the Mountain...

In early June, we held our first "Spring-into-Summer" Festival. It was like other Spring bazaars held at St. Mark's, in that we had food and bake sales, a plant sale, raffles and auctions; except for this event, we took a very different approach and invited the Berkshire Health Van, the Adams fire department, ambulance service, and community agencies (like SHARE, WIC & DSS Food Stamps, Berkshire Family Net, and Berkshire Child Care) to be present at a table on the grounds and make their resources available.



We didn't start there, however. We just happened upon the inclusion of community health, nutrition and human services. We began with a fundraiser that would support our general budget, designated for Missions & Outreach Ministry. To our amazement, something new, fresh and reflective of our mission as a church overshadowed the event. I believe, the Holy Spirit had another kind of purpose in mind that would expand our understanding of who we are and what we are to be about.

I received a call, earlier in May, from the wife of a parishioner. She'd attended a community services meeting in North Adams and learned that the Berkshire Health Van could go to different venues in the community to promote preventive health. She asked if that would be something St. Mark's would want for the festival. I said, "If they can do blood pressure checks or other screenings, that would be great," and told her to check in to it. We lined up the van to come

and once other agencies found out what was happening they wanted in on it. One morning I fielded three different phone calls from three different agencies who wanted to have a table at our festival. Apparently what we were doing in Adams that Saturday in June was a new concept and they wanted to be part of it. Even the night before the festival we received a call from the ambulance, asking if they could come!

The day of the festival was hot as blazes and humid. Quite a few people came by, but the numbers of attendees seemed smaller than what we had hoped. Even so, we raised over \$1,100 to underwrite our Missions & Outreach budget. The people attracted to the community service folks seemed sparse and we hoped that our guests were satisfied with their efforts - a Saturday given up for being at St. Mark's festival. *(Word back to us later was that they appreciated the opportunity to broaden their outreach into the community and were already thinking of ways to improve their part of the event, if asked back next year. They also enjoyed St. Mark's baked and grilled food!!)*

What we didn't know until right before the next Vestry meeting on the following Thursday evening, was that we had really made a difference in one family's life. Upon arrival at my office prior to the meeting, I discovered an envelope that had been slid under the door. The envelope contained a photograph of a little girl sitting on a blanket - a blanket she'd won at the festival's children's table. With the photograph was a letter expressing thanks to St. Mark's Church for hosting a festival that featured community service agencies; something she'd never seen at a church bazaar. She told of how she had recently become the caregiver for a family member with physical and mental health problems and had been at a loss as to what to

do. But now, with the referrals given by the community service representatives at our festival she was full of hope. She said, "even if only one person was helped by what you were doing it was well worth your effort."

Being a mission focused parish is not another program or gimmick to grow a church. Rather, as a mission focused congregation we seek to deeply listen to God in one another, in Scripture and the communities in which we live. We are here to fulfill the commission of Christ to go and make disciples. We are called to be servant-pilgrim people, joyfully and intentionally living out our Baptismal covenant; claiming our birthright as Christ's beloved.

For those attending the June Vestry meeting, this God-send-of-a-letter boosted spirits and reaffirmed that God has a good work for St. Mark's to do in this community. We do make a difference in people's lives - sometimes one person at a time.

Blessings, Ellen+

A Story of Servant Leadership

"The Outward Journey: Wherever Two or Three Are Gathered"

by R. Ellen White

Being mission focused isn't dependent on numbers: having loads of money or many people. Rather, being mission focused is a way of being and doing that is born through the Holy Spirit who transforms minds, gives rest to souls, sparks imaginations, and sends us out into the world in mission. This inward and outward journey is a movement toward living into the life of Christ that is both individual and communal. One person may sense a calling, but confirmation comes through community.

This happened to a good friend of mine. As an Episcopalian layman, he wanted, upon retirement, to be a volunteer in mission. He didn't know how this call would manifest, but with prayer, study and a listening heart he made his way through a wilderness experience of waiting and being prepared.

A call was issued by his church to respond to the need for rehabbing Katrina-houses in New Orleans. A few weeks ago, after much prayer, discernment, planning and coordination of schedules, my friend and two other like minded and spirited persons from his church joined three Interns with Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana (EDOLA) and three others from Iowa to tape and spackle wallboard/sheetrock in a double shot-gun house in the 9th Ward. The next day a youth group from another location came and sanded over what they'd done.

The opportunity for service didn't end with the job of mudding that house. My friend's mission team's next project probably was the most meaningful. With the help of EDOLA Interns, they took on the task of moving an 80 year old woman from her FEMA trailer into her completed house in Metairie. ¹

The following is an excerpt from my friend's email to me:

EDOLA had been trying to get her to move for some time, but her house was jammed with clothes, furniture, and other household goods (all in good condition) that her relatives and other churches had given her. The task was simply overwhelming for her. The homeowner didn't know where to begin and didn't want to leave her trailer. However, it's no longer legal to live in FEMA trailers in New Orleans, so the clock was ticking.

The mission team divided up the tasks. Two began at one end of the house to make it livable and eventually worked their way through the entire house. The third member spent hours putting stuff away in the kitchen. The EDOLA interns helped move stuff and cleaned and polished furniture and china. Toward the end of the morning the homeowner's house looked terrific. At that point, the EDOLA Intern-in-charge of the group essentially took on the role of a social worker and started talking to the elderly householder about moving some items out of her FEMA trailer. The homeowner agreed, and ultimately the team moved everything out of the trailer and into the house. The homeowner was delighted.

Then the funniest part of their trip occurred. This 80 year-old woman's 80-year-old brother-in-law, who is an attorney, called her. Here's the conversation:

Brother-in-Law (BinL): *You know you have a subpoena from the city government to attend a hearing to describe why you can't leave your FEMA trailer. You simply have to move into the house.*

Homeowner: *I've moved! I'm now completely in the house!*

BinL: *Huh? You're kidding! How did that happen?*

Homeowner: *The Episcopalians came and moved me! And, two men fixed my bed frame that the Lutherans said couldn't be repaired! You can call FEMA and tell them to pick up the trailer!*

BinL: *The Baptists came and moved you? Or, were they Catholics?*

Homeowner: *No, they weren't Baptists? They weren't Catholics. They were Episcopalians!*

Homeowner: *God moves in mysterious ways!*

BinL: *His wonders to perform!*

Matthew 81:20

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (King James Version)

"When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there." (The Message Version)

Knit & Stitch ...

The Group has been busy knitting along. At this point we have 3 shawls and 4 sweaters in progress.

Something good is happening!

Many of you know that we have home knitters doing projects. . .Emma Morin and Jean Palano are just 2 of those knitters to name a few. . .Last week at the weekly Morning Prayer at the Millhouses, Jean and I were discussing the knitting. Well. . .guess what? Marion Sherman, one of our faithful Wednesday

Worshippers, thought the knitting was so interesting and wondered if she could do some. . .Well now, let me tell you, we couldn't let this opportunity go by. I talked to her about the skill level she had and her interest was so keen. . .this week at the Wednesday Prayer meeting I brought her yarn, needles and patterns. She is going to try to knit. . .she used to knit many years ago. . .but knitting is like riding a bicycle. . .once you do it you don't forget it! How God is blessing our knitting group, as well as the Wednesday Morning Prayer with the residents in the Millhouse. I would like anyone reading this letter to please try to join us just once, believe me, you will be back each week. We meet in the Parish house at 9:00 A.M. and walk over to the Millhouse together. St. Mark's is a growing Community of Worshipers, following in the footsteps of Christ. We are starting a new project. . .knitting for the Seamen. . .Does that peak your interest??? Watch for more in the next *Epistle*.

~Barbara Fiske

Stewardship Committee Alzheimer's Workshop...

On Tuesday, June 17th, the Stewardship Committee presented a workshop on Alzheimer's disease with Beth Hinkley-Mougin as our guest speaker. Since our group was small, we sat around a table and discussed our concerns about Alzheimer's Disease with Beth, who is a social worker with the Visiting Nurse's Association. Each of us has been touched by this disease in some way, either through a friend, co-worker or loved one. Beth made us feel very much at ease and answered our questions in a very positive and sensitive manner.

She shared some experiences she has had working with Dementia and Alzheimer's. Some of them were sad and some humorous. There were some laughs and tears but we all walked away feeling we had learned something valuable.

~JoAnn Gagne, Stewardship Chair

Coming Events in our Parish...

Annual Youth Group Tag & Bake Sale

Saturday, August 9, 2008:

Our Youth Group is having their annual tag and bake sale on this date. Donations of baked goods as well as items for the tag sale will be greatly appreciated. Goods for the Tag Sale will be accepted thru August 3, the sooner the better, so things can be appropriately priced. Food items can be dropped off at the Parish House on Friday, August 8th and the morning of the 9th. In addition to the two sales, there will be a Breakfast/Lunch Café. Tables and chairs will be set up under the canopy for folks to eat, visit and relax. Mark your calendar and plan to stop by!

~Jo Ann Delisle

Sunday, August 10, 2008:

WHAT: Joint Picnic/Service w/St. John's North Adams

WHERE: Clarksburg Town Field

TIME: 11:00 am Service w/Eucharist

12 noon Picnic Begins

WHERE: Clarksburg Town Field

BRING: A dish to share and lawn chair

The churches will provide hot dogs, hamburgs, rolls, paper products, beverages, including coffee, condiments. There will be games for the kids, softball, and just general fun. Mark your calendar and plan to join us!

To get to the Clarksburg Town Field, take Rt 8 north to North Adams....from the Holiday Inn in North Adams, continue straight thru....it's 1.6 miles from that intersection, on your right. You might want to consider car-pooling!

~Joe DeOrdio

Graduation Congratulations to:

Talon Gagne and Megan Wojciechowski on their graduation from Adams Memorial Middle School.

Scott Wojciechowski on his graduation from Hoosac Valley High School.

Note: Talon is JoAnn Gagne's grandson and Megan and Scott are Jane & Bob LeBeau's grandchildren.

Treasurer's Report...

Our committed pledge income remains under plan by \$2,320 due to half of the pledges being behind by one week or more. We have maintained our effort to control discretionary costs with the year to date spending at \$4,705 below budget.

Income

Current Month	\$ 8,479.12
Budget YTD	82,838.50
Current YTD	<u>72,969.32</u>
Over/(under) YTD	\$ (9,869.18)

Expenses

Current Month	\$(12,340.57)
Budget YTD	(82,302.90)
Current YTD	<u>(74,969.07)</u>
Over/(Under) YTD	\$ 7,333.83

Surplus/Deficit

Current Month	\$ (3,861.45)
Budget YTD	535.60
Current YTD	<u>(1,999.75)</u>
Over/Under YTD	\$ (2,535.35)

Please contact Carol Tetlow if you have any questions regarding our receipts/expenses. Giving statements will be available in the back of the church by July 21st.