

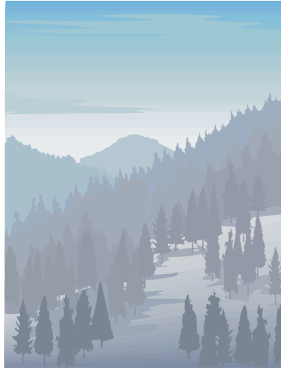


St. Mark's Epistle

November 2008

View from the Mountain...

St. Mark's folks were blessed to have the presence of our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Gordon Scruton, with us during the month of October. We so appreciated his leadership during the Sunday morning worship service; so much so, folks were talking about it later on in the week - even recalling his sermon and how much they received through him that day. The Vestry had the privilege of spending a couple of hours earlier in that week with Bishop Scruton, where he led the Vestry members in a reflection of Matthew 5:1-16, a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. The reading ended with the following verses:



"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste, how can it be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Here are a few of my thoughts on the text:

There's an ancient saying, "Salt is Holy." This is because salt is one of those universal essential things of life. We may have to limit our salt intake because of health reasons, but we cannot go for long periods of time without the chemical, sodium chloride, in our diet. It is necessary for proper bodily function. In Biblical times, there was hardly a food that was not seasoned with salt. Like the writer of the Book of Job, we'd

agree: *"Can something tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job 6:6)*

Salt preserves food. I learned this early in my life when my dad, along with his many in-laws, would butcher hogs and calves they'd been raising. We'd spend our Thanksgiving holiday preserving meat by canning or freezing. Hams would be salt cured. Hung in dark, dry rooms that had no heat source, they would be covered by a layer of salt that would draw out the moisture, thereby preserving the meat. When the ham had been cured, my dad would cut off the green mold that formed on the outside of the ham. He then would take a hacksaw and slice off pieces of the dry ham and mom would soak the meat before she fried it up for a meal - served with biscuits and rich brown gravy. (There goes my blood pressure! But my, it is good-eats!)

Back to the Bible. For the Hebrews, salt came to symbolize permanence. So much so, that parties making agreements and treaties used salt in a ritual to symbolize it being unbreakable. The use of salt became a holy act, infusing day-to-day eating habits with hope of blessing and God's continuing good favor. Salt was also used as a portent against evil forces and as a healing agent.

In the Matthew passage, Jesus calls us to salt the earth and light the world, to remember that our good deeds are meant to season others, so that the best is brought out of them. Our actions are not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of our neighbors, to bring out their own natural flavor that is a gift of the Holy One.

We are the salt of the earth. We bring out the good in others. We bring out what is pleasing, what is tasteful to God in others. When we do this, then we light up God's face for people to see.

Our God is a salty God, giving us many things to preserve us; giving us the guidance that brings out the

best in us. So what is in your life? Are you losing your flavor, your zest for life, your taste for the things of God? Do you know that which is necessary for authentic living? Take these thoughts with you as we enter into the Thanksgiving holiday and the season of Advent.

Blessings,
Ellen+

From the Junior Warden...

At long last, we are beginning construction of a handicap ramp for access into the church through the present door into the choir room. During the construction, please use the rear door to enter. If you need a key, contact Luke Celantano or Frank Palano.

New windows have been installed at the rear and side of the church. Sincere thanks to Mike Molleur and Luke Celantano for their fine work.

The Rectory driveway has been graded, and the drains cleaned out. It still looks great after all the rain we have had.

I am looking for volunteers to help me with the Buildings & Grounds. If you are interested, please speak with me after service on Sunday or give me a call at home, 743-0363.

*Frank S. Palano
Junior Warden*



Ladies' Tea Party...

When the first Ladies' Tea Party was held in May of this Year, Meta Cardin told the girls that the ladies of St. John's, North Adams along w/the ladies

of St. Mark's, Adams used to hold what they called Cathedral Teas. So, for our second Ladies' Tea Party, we invited the girls from St. John's to join us. Our second party, on October 11th, was a great success. We were especially pleased to have Meta join us for the event. The next party is scheduled for spring 2009.

Jo Ann Delisle

Berkshire Episcopalians...

You are invited to Trinity Episcopal Church, Lenox, on Saturday, November 15 at 5 pm for a special Taize Service with guest Brother John from the Taize

Community in France, followed by a potluck supper. Folks are coming from at least four states for this event and it should be very special!

Knit 'n Stitch News...

The group has been very busy knitting for the homeless and the seamen. We fully expect to have a full basket of items to be blessed by November 1st. Please remember to bring in items such as hats, scarves, and mittens. Receptacles are located at the rear of the church.

We welcomed two new members, Mabel Sherman and Mary Smachetti this past month. There is plenty of room if you would like to join us as well. Stop by any Monday afternoon and join us for prayers, stories and fellowship while knitting or crocheting.

Barbara Fiske

Useful Information on Home Heating Assistance!

Information from the Fuel Assistance Forum held at MCLA on Sept. 3, hosted by Rep. Dan Bosley and Sen. Ben Downing.

- To get most any home heating assistance, regardless of income level, get a free Energy Audit first. Contact MassSave at 866-527-7283 (expect 6 to 8 weeks for appointment).
- For those households at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level, you are eligible for home heating assistant through the KIHEAP program. This assistance is available via application through the Berkshire Community Action Council.
- Additional assistance from Berkshire community Action includes home weatherization assistance.
- For the elderly, home heating assistance over & above the LIHEAP program is available through Elder Services (up to \$250).
- A one-time fuel oil delivery assistance is available through Citizen Energy for income-qualified applicants.
- No-interest loans (up to \$10,000, up to 7 years) for heating system, window upgrades (MassSave).
- For everyone that is a National Grid customer, via MassSave & CET (the Center for Ecological Technology) 75% of up to \$2000 in home weatherization investment (insulation, windows, etc.)
- For Berkshire Gas customers, a 50% rebate up to \$1500.

- For everyone, purchase heating oil at a discount via a CET co-op program (as of Sep 3, \$3.76 a gallon with payment within 30 days. This is not a "lock-in" price; it changes weekly.
 - Heating Assistance Contact Information:
 - Berkshire Community Action (413) 499-4421
 - Northern Berkshire Community Action Council (413) 663-3014
 - Center for Ecological Technology (CET): (413) 586-7350
 - Online: www.cetonline.org
 - MassSave: (866) 527-7283
 - Citizen's Energy:
 - Oil Assistance: (877) 563-4645
 - Gas Assistance: (866) 427-9918
 - National Grid: (800) 322-3223
 - Berkshire Gas: (800) 292-5012
 - Elder Svcs. Berkshire County: (413) 499-0524

Servant Leadership Center of the Berkshires...

Dear Friends of Servant Leadership,

Here are two upcoming Servant Leadership opportunities that I wanted you to know about. Returning to the Berkshires on November 1st, is Dr. Ruth Anderson, the director of the School of Servant Leadership in Greensboro, NC. She is simply wonderful, extremely engaging and a real delight. If you have never had the opportunity to hear her speak, I invite you to come and participate. She will be teaching about sacred activism and how those of us who love to serve can continue to feed our souls while doing God's work in the world.

In addition, Dr. Jill Rierdan, a seminarian at Andover Newton will be leading us in a quiet day on November 15th to prepare our hearts for the upcoming Advent Season. This morning retreat will engage participants in silence and reflection using the creative process. No artistic experience is needed, just a desire to be present to yourself and to God.

If you have any questions or would like to register, please for to www.berkshireservantleadership.org or contact me here at (413) 448-8276. I hope you will join us.

Blessings, Jenny

The Rev. Jennifer E. Gregg, Coordinator
Berkshire Servant Leadership Center

HERE ARE THE DETAILS!!!

WHAT: Spiritual Practices for Sacred Activists

- WHERE: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Pittsfield
 - WHEN: Saturday, November 1st
 - TIME: 10 AM - 3 PM
 - COST: \$20 per person, including lunch
 - LED BY: Dr. Ruth Anderson, Director of the School of Servant Leadership, Greensboro, NC.
- Sacred Activism is about serving God's dream for a transformed world. It is grounded in practical action and expressed in five ways:
- ❖ Serving God with the whole our being.
 - ❖ Service ourselves as sacred instruments of divine co-creation, by keeping ourselves whole through proper diet, rest, exercise, prayer, growth, and healing.
 - ❖ Serving the divine image in others
 - ❖ Serving our local community, by figuring out what we realistically can and are called to do in our own community with our own resources.
 - ❖ Serving the planet as a global citizen, by considering what it means to have sacred compassion on every level for all beings and living our lives accordingly. However, to serve others at this level and with continued passion we need to "refuel" and drink deeply from the well that God offers. In this seemingly chaotic world we live in, so often, we spend our time giving of ourselves to others: to the church, our children and families, raising awareness to causes we are passionate about, and after time we can feel exhausted, physically ready but spiritually depleted. On November 1st, we who are passionate about serving others will gather for time to refuel and learn practices that can ground us and allow us to give more deeply. We will spend our time learning and exploring various spiritual practices so that we can be engaged, open-hearted and energetic servant leaders.

WHAT: Preparing for Advent: Time & Space for Grace

WHEN: Saturday, November 15th

WHERE: St. Stephen's, Pittsfield

TIME: 9:30-1:00 pm

During this quiet day retreat, participants will be engaged in silence, reflection, prayer and the arts to prepare our hearts for Advent.

LED BY: Dr. Jill Rierdan, Seminarian at St. Stephen's

Leprosy Mission Update...

Barbara Fiske received the following letter recently and wanted to share it with everyone:

Dear Barbara,

We thank you, and all the ladies at St. Mark's Church for collecting and cutting these stamps for the Leprosy Mission. We also note that it is a wonderful collection of stamps that our stamp buyers will be interested in.

All money raised from the sale of stamps goes toward funding programmes run by The Leprosy Mission in Chittagong, Bangladesh. There are more than 1000 people who live with permanent physical disability due to leprosy in this city, with a further 4000 diagnosed with the disease over the past year, most of whom live in one of 140 slums found around Chittagong. Your funding of these programmes is vital for bringing lasting change to these communities, and helping to eliminate leprosy in Bangladesh.

Thank you once again for your time and effort in helping us combat leprosy.

Yours sincerely,

David Hall, Executive Director

Keep those stamps coming! As you can see, they are really helping others.

A Prayer

For Those Growing Older

Lord, Thou knowest I am growing older.

Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject. Release me from the recital of endless detail. Give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains. They are increasing with the years and my love to speak of them grows sweeter as time goes by. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Make me thoughtful, but not nosey; helpful, but not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it does seem a pity not to use it all.

But Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Amen

Submitted by Betty Oparowski

Treasurer's Report...

At the end of September, our spending was \$23,434 under budget. This was primarily driven by the memorial donation received during the month.

Our committee pledge income remains under plan by \$3,638 due to 29 of our 58 pledges being behind by one week or more. Although the number of pledges are slightly lower in September, the dollar amount continues to grow. Our expenses this month are \$2,966 higher than budget due to the renovation of the Rectory driveway in the amount of \$2,000 and the new budget for fuel oil of \$966.

Income

Current Month	\$ 39,190
Budget YTD	122,973
Current YTD	142,350
Over/Under YTD	19,377

Expenses

Current Month	(\$ 15,756)
Budget YTD	(122,988)
Current YTD	(112,295)
Over/Under YTD	10,693

Surplus/Deficit

Current Month	\$ 23,434
Budget YTD	(15)
Current YTD	30,055
Over/Under YTD	30,070

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding our receipts or expenses. Detailed income statement is available on request.

*Carol Tetlow
Treasurer*

Photographs wanted...

Does anyone have pictures of last year's Children's Christmas Party sponsored by the St. Mark's Youth Group? If so, please contact Jo Ann Delisle. She would like to borrow them to make copies. Should you have them on disk, please e-mail them to her at: amajoa@verizon.net.

Hopeful Thoughts for Uncertain Times...

The current financial crisis is causing feelings of both desperation and euphoria. People are so upset, and scared, that they are going through a whirlwind of emotions. We have to be careful that we do not let these emotions affect other aspects of our lives.

Let's talk about it.

Volatility in the stock market is the name of the game right now, and probably will be for quite awhile. Hour by hour we are flooded with a truckload of conflicting information. The media continues to report information on the financial world that would have us worry, struggle and panic over the financial markets and our American economy. They focus on the sensational, and sometimes that causes us to miss what's really important. These reporters capitalize on our fears. Why do they do this? Because the emotional hype makes news and makes money!

As you listen to the daily news reports remember these points:

- Not all of those persons interviewed on TV are experts.
- According to recent Federal Reserve data, American households have almost \$12 trillion dollars in cash, enough to pay off every home mortgage in America.
- The true crisis we face is a "crisis of confidence."
- We have been here before and have always come back stronger.
- Community Banks and Credit Unions are doing fine. While large banks are afraid to loan, Community Banks and Credit Unions look poised to benefit. While larger banks are tightening lending, and pulling in lines of credit out of fear of losses, this has presented a great opportunity to Community Banks and Credit Unions. These smaller banking institutions have been virtually untouched by the credit crisis. They are making loans, issuing credit cards, and expanding their wealth management relationships with their customers or members.

We need to put things into perspective. What is happening today is not unprecedented or unnatural,

although it may be happening on a larger scale. This is the system's way of cleaning out the excesses; leading to a healthy renewal of the global financial system in ways that we probably can not even imagine. Yes, we are in a recession, but we are not in a depression and we are not going to be. Our situation is quite different from the early days of the depression.

The current credit problem was started by defaults of subprime mortgages. For years banks were encouraged to write mortgages for subprime customers.... often with nothing down. The assumption was that housing prices would continue to rise and that a sufficient number of subprime customers would make their payments so that these types of mortgages would be profitable overall. Both assumptions were wrong. Today, only 15 banks have failed. Most were shut down and sold to other banks. All the customer' accounts were sold to other banks and no depositor lost money.

God has blessed us with many gifts. One of those gifts is our ability to respond, as opposed to react. Nothing can be accomplished by running away or sticking our heads in the sand. In uncertain times, it is always best to get back to basics, like:

- * Spending less than we earn
- * Paying down debt
- * Using asset allocation to diversify our investments
- * Making good investment decisions today

We need to keep our "cool". We need to be patient and wait for more rational markets. Just because the world goes crazy in this current mania, does not mean we have to participate. We need to access the common sense that has gotten us through many other times of uncertainty and dramatic change.

Before I finish, I want to say that our ultimate trust needs to be in God and God's providential grace. Our hope is in the Lord, who is source of all that we have, and all that we are. Through the power of prayer, we have access to a presence that sustains us through all of life's ups and downs. As each day begins, be mindful of our country's leaders, and pray for those who are working hard to find solutions to this crisis of confidence. Remember, also, that America is a strong nation. Americans are a strong people, courageous, independent and resourceful. We have seen and survived dramatic times before. With God's help we will survive this crisis too.

JoAnn Gagne, Vestry member/ Stewardship Chair