



The Quarterly Link

The newsletter of

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

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From the Clergy

Responding to General Convention 2009

For 10 days in July the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in Anaheim, California. With the departure from the Episcopal Church of a major portion of the conservative and orthodox voices over the past year, this convention was predicted to be characterized by a lack of theological balance. During the past few days, this prediction has been proven to be overly optimistic.

In a matter of days, the General Convention has absolutely denied the role of the Church as the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), our position as a "constituent member of the Anglican Communion" (Constitution) and the sufficiency of Scripture as containing "all things necessary to Salvation" (Article VI of the Articles of Religion and the signed statement required for all ordinations, deacon, priest and bishop). Although the effect of these actions is immensely painful, at least now there is perfect clar-

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ity as to where our venerable denomination stands in the history of the Church.

Being in the line of the witnesses of the early Church and the reformation leaders Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, as your clergy we see this clouding of the Gospel light as an opportunity to shine even brighter for Jesus Christ. As Mordecai merely continued to be "the Jew" under the persecution of Haman and God prevailed (Esther) and as Latimer encouraged Ridley at the stake in Oxford with the exclamation of the power of proclamation provided by their martyrdom, your clergy will continue to stand firm for the Gospel in the context of the Episcopal Church until our voice is eliminated by God or the Episcopal Church.

To that end, your clergy have decided to publicly affirm the Anglican Covenant as most recently presented in the Ridley-Cambridge draft. We will also seek the mind of the Vestry in this matter. In addition, we will not officiate or otherwise participate in ceremonies celebrating unions between couples whose make up is other than one male and one female (with integrity between genetic composition and gender identity) with the intention of being life-long and monogamous.

Likewise, we will not be a party to the ordination of any deacon, priest or bishop who is in a partnered gay, lesbian or transgendered relationship. At the same time, we vow to be faithful ministers of the Gospel to gay, lesbian, transgendered and transsexual individuals as fellow creations of God and needing the comfort of God's true word and the loving care of his community, the Church. We declare that the authority of our ministry, teaching, preaching and life is and will continue to be God's will as he has revealed it in Holy Scripture.

In terms of our canonical relationship with the Diocese of Virginia, we reaffirm our intention, expressed in our December, 2006 statement, to remain active in the diocese and take no actions with respect to church property or finances which, though prudent by worldly standards, would betray our conscience and trust in Almighty God. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19 KJV)

The Rev. Charles D. Alley, Ph.D.
Rector

The Rev. Mario Gonzalez del Solar,
D.Min.
Assistant to the Rector

Music Notes

Welcome our new music minister!

Susan H. Wilson, our new director of music ministries, joins us after serving churches in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Kentucky. After adopting two daughters, Susan and her husband, Tom, lived in La Jolla, California, where they attended in St. James by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, while she took a "motherhood sabbatical."

Please welcome Susan and her family into our church family when she begins her ministry here on August 17.

Be sure to personally thank the members of the Music Director Search Committee (Lee Pemberton, Leslie Harris, Jim Schue, Lissa Power deFur and Jeff Hassler) for their dedicated and thorough labor on our behalf. They received over 25 applications, and after conducting extensive interviews, they recommended that the rector extend a call to Susan.

An update from the Barlows

To Our St. Matt's Family,

Megan and I have been deeply moved by the overwhelming support we have received over the last several weeks and months. The inspiring cards and well wishes have certainly confirmed all of the support and love we have felt while serving St. Matthew's Episcopal Church.

Please accept our gratitude for the tremendously generous going-away gift from the church, for the daily e-mails and Facebook messages encouraging us along the way, for the beautiful cards, and for your continued prayers as we discern God's will for our lives in Chicago.

We finally sold our home in Richmond and are now living in a suburb

northwest of Chicago called Arlington Heights. Megan and I are blessed to have secured employment fairly quickly. She will begin teaching music at North Barrington Elementary school next week. I will be serving a very small church in Downers Grove as the Director of Music Ministries. Classes at Concordia University Wisconsin begin next summer and I am very excited to finally get started on my Master of Church Music (Choral Directing) degree.

Thank you again to all of our family at St. Matthew's. We will cherish the time we have had together and pray that God will continue to bless the ministries at St. Matt's. We will keep in touch and hope that you all will continue praying for God's will in our lives.

Pastoral Pointers

Expect to be thankful

By the Rev. Mario Gonzalez del Solar

I think every one of us complains from time to time: the weather is too hot or too cold, the parking lot was too full or too empty, or the traffic was dreadful, and so on. This comes, I believe, from a sense that lurks deep in the heart of every human being that things in this world are not as they should be. And of course when circumstances in our lives become painful and really difficult, this deep felt sense can rise to the top, and we begin desperately to want things to be corrected, to "get back to normal," so to speak.

In one sense, our intuition that things aren't right with the world is absolutely correct. As Paul says in Romans 8:22, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." Not only human beings, but the whole creation longs for the day when predators

won't endanger the young of other species, and earthquakes and hurricanes kill whole populations indiscriminately.

But when we think God owes us better circumstances, our dissatisfaction is unjustified. In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus heals a group of ten Samaritan lepers who call out to him for mercy, but only one returns to thank him. Jesus asks, "Were not all then cleansed? Where are the other nine?" (Luke 17:17)

When we consider the lepers' circumstances, this is a very good question. First of all, as lepers they were absolutely and permanently outcast from their own families as well as the rest of society. But they were also *Samaritan* lepers: members of the people the Jews, and from the Jewish point of view, God himself despised more than any other.

In healing them of their leprosy, Jesus instantly removed both of these insurmountable calamities. Yet 90% of this group never even said, "Thank you." It seems the nine who went away somehow felt they were owed their restoration. Their ingratitude illustrates their unworthiness. They had asked Jesus for mercy, but forgot that mercy isn't deserved—God gives it freely precisely to those *who don't deserve it*.

People behave this way because deep down we believe we deserve things to be a certain way, and so we expect it. We expect the food to be hot or the weather to be pleasant, or our health to be robust. And when it's not, we complain—I know I do. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, I complain "that the world will not devote itself to making me happy."

Shaw's outlook on our expectations is instructive. I ask myself: "Do you expect God to make you happy? Are you complaining because he hasn't?"

In a very real sense, the world as we know it is upside down. In our deepest selves, we realize that. But Jesus turned the world of those ten lepers right-side up. He's done no less for you and for me in taking on our human nature to die in our place and bring us to God our Father. He himself is our completion and our rightness. So, join me in thanking him daily for bringing us to him. Living right-side up with Christ is a reward our upside-down circumstances can't give us!

From our missionaries in Ethiopia

And so it begins

By Mike and Amy Rodgers

This new project of faith has just finished its second month. It was on June 1 that the new "Langano Community Development Project" officially commenced. The community has decided to call the project Langano Farms. Looking back and seeing how it originated blows me away — how my family came to Ethiopia, how our original job duties transformed and then ended, how we "closed the door" on living in Ethiopia just to see God kick the door wide open again with this new project. It is not scary but very peaceful to be in His midst, to see His hand working, to see the Ethiopian leaders and community embrace this project, to see your enthusiasm and support for this project.

Kaweti Shuku and I offered a community meeting on that June 1 commencement date to introduce the project and answer questions. There were some concerns from a few. The biggest question was "Why ... what is your motivation?" One fellow said to me in front of the other 200 gathered: "You are just trying to benefit SIM!"

I am still not exactly sure the rationale for his statement at that time but I was sure in my reply that if they (i.e. the community) didn't want me here that my family would leave immediately. Conversely, I stated, unless God called me home I would stay and help. I believe trust has been established and an esprit de corps exists within the project and community.

We are trying to change the definition of *quid pro quo* here in the community from "You do for me and I do for you" to "God does for me and I do for you."

Children's Education

Your face, Lord, I will seek.

By Jill Rich

While reading my devotion the other evening, I was struck by verse 8 of Psalm 27, "My heart says of you, 'seek His face. Your face, LORD, I will seek.'" I pictured a little boy grabbing his parent's face and pulling it close to his own to get his point across.

As I contemplated seeking God's face, I wished He would just grab my face and, with Hollywood sci-fi skills, zap me. And then zap my kids. But that would be Him seeking my face, and He already knows me because He made me. The verse is really all about me seeking Him, and that's the hard part.

Seeking Him takes discipline. Just like learning a foreign language, you have to make a daily effort to master the material. Daily time with Him in His word, prayer and fellowship all help to reveal His face to us.

But unlike a language, the benefits of learning God go beyond the academic. Knowing God is loving God. Loving Him is being in relationship with Him. In return, we are loved by Him.

He gives us His peace. In the chaos of parenting and politics, His peace will help keep our vision cleared of emotional debris and obstacles. He is our champion. Every little girl wants a knight in shining armor (or a vampire). Every little boy wants to go to battle and win. God fights for us, and when He is on our side, we are victorious.

God also gives us His vision. We begin to see each other and creation as He does. His love for us overflows into our relationships and to our work. We see each other as made in His image and worthy of respect. Work, though sometimes tedious, becomes an opportunity to give Him glory with a job well done.

My prayer for you and your children is that together we may seek His face. I pray not only that we would seek Him, but that we would hunger and thirst for Him to the point that nothing else would suffice. And then take His love for us and pour it out on all those around.

Warden's Column

Check your trajectory

By Vern Plack

During the most recent Vestry meeting, our Rector (Chuck) challenged the Vestry to “check our trajectory.” Chuck followed up with several examples in areas such as ministry, outreach, missions and administration where we are currently doing less than we used to do.

While no single example pointed to a material difference from the past, the “sum of the parts” did appear meaningful and left many of us convicted that perhaps we were not doing everything that we should be doing.

Perhaps we have become too comfortable, perhaps we are not working as hard as we should and perhaps we’ve allowed our will to be done rather than God’s will for St. Matthew’s. Have we lost our vibrant sense of mission? Chuck’s comments served as a pointed yet encouraging reminder for us to fully use the gifts God has given us for His will and for His glory.

As your senior warden, I’d like to challenge all members of the St. Matthew’s community to “check your trajectory.” Are you allowing God’s will to rule your life? Are you using the gifts God has blessed you with in a manner that is pleasing to Him and glorifies His name?

If you are like me, the answer to these questions is not always a resounding yes. Please pray about this and ask God to help you and guide your “trajectory” as we look forward.

As Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV) says:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart / and lean not on you own understanding; / In all your ways acknowledge him, / and he will make your paths straight.

2009 Budget Status Report

	Annual Budget	As of Aug. 31, 2009	
		Actual	Percent
Total Support	\$411,920	\$494,442	120
Total Expenses	\$433,989	\$422,499	97.4