



The Quarterly Link

The newsletter of

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

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(All these articles are also available on-line, at www.stmatthewsrichmond.org)

A BOLD NEW ADVENTURE

By The Rev. Chuck Alley, Rector

Who are we as the parish of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia?

- According to our mission statement, we describe our function as "to know Christ and to make him known through the power of the Holy Spirit, devotion to Christ, fellowship within the church, and revelation of God's nature in word and deed" (Bylaws, Article I, section 1).
- Over the years, on the basis of this mission statement, we have articulated our vision as being a "sending church," a community of Jesus whose purpose is to use all its resources to the end of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the world.
- Since 2004, we have spoken of ourselves as a "missional church." As such, we are a community that is called to "announce and demonstrate the purpose and direction of God in

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the world through Jesus Christ" (from The Gospel and Our Culture Network).

It is clear then that we understand ourselves to be a community that is focused on mission and following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the past, the congregation of St. Matthews has demonstrated strength in several mission areas:

- funding missions and ministries through the Outreach Committee process as well as special designations of plate and endowment funds;
- providing occasional manpower for various ministries from Habitat for

Humanity and CARITAS in Richmond to Mission to the World in Belize;

- birthing, through the Reverend Tad de Bordenave, the mission agency, Anglican Frontier Missions;
- sending a number of our members and lay staff into full time Christian vocations, including the ordained ministry; and
- keeping, as a priority, the designation of 20% of our parish income to ministries beyond our walls.

The one thing that appears to be lacking, however, is a parish identity with a specific mission.

The importance of a “signature” mission became apparent when I visited communities in the diocese and wider church where there is an excitement generated by a specific mission identity. Such an identity enables the members of these communities to focus their resources, prayers and activities in a concerted effort to make a difference for the kingdom and the world.

Based on that experience, I have set as a goal for 2010 to establish a Missions Committee.

- This committee will be distinct from the Outreach Committee.
- The members will have the task of researching and identifying a specific mission for our parish.
- The raw materials for their labors will be the specific circumstances and gifts that we have as a community.

The God-given resources of the congregation must play a major role in the discernment of the shape of our “signature” mission. We tend to think of the local

parish and its members when we read St. Paul’s teachings on the Church as the Body of Christ. However, I believe that his teaching also applies to the Church universal. Different local congregations have different gifts to contribute to the success of the overall mission of the Body. Our challenge is discerning how we can bring together our Spirit-given gifts and a spiritual need in the world so that God’s redeeming love might be made known.

As members of the St. Matthew’s community, you are invited to participate in this exciting initiative immediately. I solicit your prayers, your suggestions and your commitment to being not only hearers of the word, but doers also (James 1:22) and would be happy to have you come by the office to discuss with me this bold new adventure for St. Matthew’s.

Welcome new Vestry members

At the annual parish meeting Feb. 28, 2010, five individuals were elected to serve on the Vestry of St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church.

To serve a full three-year term: James Cocks, Bill Davidson, Christine Hopkins and Michael Rhodes.

To fulfill a two-year term caused by a resignation: Doug LeBlanc.

Thank you and “well done” to the retiring Vestry class of 2010: Vernon Plack (senior warden), Shawn Garitz, Patricia Lewis and Liz Forman.

Lenten Supper program underway

2010 LENTEN SERIES – This year’s series is entitled “Follow Me”, which comes from Matthew 4:19 and Jesus’ call to his first disciples. Each of the five Wednesday evenings of our series we will hear from a ministry leader who has made following Jesus his/her fulltime vocation.

Feb. 24: Julian Linnell, Anglican Frontier Missions

March 3: Jennifer Ernst, Mission to Sudan

March 10: Dr. Charles Beckett, The Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam

March 17: Buddy Childress, Needle’s Eye Ministry

March 24: William Alley, Chaplain, US Army

Please come join us for Holy Eucharist at 5:45 p.m., covered dish supper at 6:15 p.m. and program from 7 to 8 p.m. Children’s program and nursery provided.

Two Retreats this spring

Women’s Retreat – This year the women of St. Matthews are retreating close to home. The 2010 Women’s Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 6th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Parish Hall. The day’s topic is *Becoming a Proverbs 31 Woman* shared by Barbara Markland, Bible teacher and author of several Bible studies and devotionals. Markland, who has presented at St. Matthews’ womens’ events before, promises to “explore the timeless Biblical standards for the many roles of women - virtuous loving wife, wise tender mother and grandmother, successful businesswoman, compassionate member of the community, and passionate worshiper of Jesus.” More information on Markland as well as her Midlothian-based ministry can be found at www.timeforablessing.com.

Shrine Mont Parish Retreat is set for April 30-May 2 at Shrine Mont in the Shenandoah Valley. Attendance is limited to 100 this year, so register soon! Registration forms are available on the St. Matthew’s web site, stmatthewsrichmond.org, or at the Shrine Mont booth in the Parish Hall after the 10:30 a.m. service. Our guest teacher this year is the Rev. Geoff Gwynne, Vicar of Christ the King Episcopal Church in Harrisonburg. He will focus on our theme for 2010, “Come, Follow Me” and share how he was called to the ministry of founding a new Episcopal parish. A full children’s and youth program will be available. Join us for great food, fellowship, worship and fun! For more info, check the web site or call Norm Hyde, 241-4634.

Parish Life Committee

The St. Matthew’s Parish Life Committee has warmer weather on the brain and is in the process of planning some fun activities for summertime.

A parish picnic is on the agenda for July, though no official date has been set yet. The committee also hopes to arrange a parish baseball night at the Diamond to welcome and watch the new Richmond Flying Squirrels. More information on both events will be available as dates and schedules are solidified. Looking ahead further in the year, the committee plans to hold another ice cream social in conjunction with St. Matthews Day.

As for current happenings, Supper Club participants will host and attend their final suppers for the season in March. Planning for the next round of supper club to begin in October is underway.

Pastoral Pointers

We're never done growing

by the Rev. Mario Gonzalez del Solar

When our daughter Debbie was expecting our first grandchild, people who knew promised us that being grandparents would prove to be a wonderful blessing. How right they were! Every time we see little William (now 20 months old) we're delighted at how much he's learned and developed. Last week I watched as Jane, Debbie and Rich's garrulous cat, walked by yowling loudly for food. William's eyes followed her intently. He reached out to her, and clearly but deliberately announced, "CA-T!" over and over again. But wait — there's more! Just yesterday, Barbara was bathing him in his inflatable ducky tub, and he proclaimed, "DU-CK!"

From William's perspective, the world is an ever-expanding wonderland of fabulous new experiences, some strange, some delightful, some unpleasant and painful. It's a privilege to stand by and watch him as he makes his way through this new territory with wondering eyes. Everything is so new, so exciting, so fascinating to him. Experiences that are barely noticeable for us will be astonishing to him — feeling grass under his bare feet for the first time, or tasting his first ice cream cone.

One of the blessings of being a grandparent is watching him take on the world with eager abandon. But one of the lessons William is teaching me is that if I'm not careful, I can very easily allow my need for security and predictability to stifle the continual growth in wonder and understanding of life, the world, and God himself that began in me when I was an infant like William.

Jesus' disciples, having heard him teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, asked him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" "He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. 18:1-3, NIV).

As adults, Jesus' disciples were naturally interested in making their way in this world, in getting ahead, in securing their future. They assumed that those activities were what one did in the Kingdom of Heaven too. They had learned what they wanted and what they didn't want; they knew who could help you and who couldn't, and so forth. In short, they had life figured out. They knew what to expect.

Now certainly we'd all agree that part of being a responsible adult is knowing how to take responsibility for oneself in order get along in this world. So what did Jesus mean by his solemn warning that "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"? I think he means that, like William, we need to have the humility to realize that no matter how old we've grown, how much experience we've had, or how much we know, we don't really know what life's about, who God is, or how he works in our lives. We don't have life figured out. We can't always know what to expect. Making life predictable frequently means manipulating people or circumstances to meet our needs. Jesus' dire warning is that the minute we think we've figured things out, we're blocking our own entrance to the kingdom.

But the good news is that Jesus is also saying that as we continue to grow like little children, we enter more and more into his kingdom. The more we

realize that life is not about “figuring out” how to get ahead, or avoid problems or deal with crises, but depending on Jesus and walking with him through those problems and crises, the more we learn about the world, about God, and about ourselves. We learn a lot about our real motives, about our selfishness and sin. We learn how much the world needs God’s love and mercy and how eager people are to receive them. And we learn more and more how majestic and satisfying and healing God’s majestic and awesome mercy and love are.

Lord, help me never stop growing. Let me never think I’ve got it all figured out, but instead show me how to grow and learn by depending on you day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute!

Music Notes

By Susan Wilson, Director of Music Ministries

Since my arrival in August of 2009 I have had the pleasure of getting to know so many of you and I appreciate the warm welcome given to me and my family.

The Chancel Choir is now working on the music of Lent, Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter. This choir rehearses on Thursday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Sunday mornings rehearsal takes place at 9:30 a.m. The Chancel Choir sings at 10:30 a.m. worship each week. We do not have a hymn choir anymore, but those who have sung in hymn choir have been encouraged to sing in the Chancel Choir. There is always room for additional singers. If you are interested in joining and can commit to weekly rehearsals, please contact me. Rehearsals include such things as working on vocal

production, breath management, diction, and musical phrasing.

The Adult Handbell Choir continues to search for additional ringers. If you have rung in the past and haven’t committed to ringing this year, we encourage you to give some prayerful thought to coming back. For those who have never rung you are welcome too. If you enjoy music and can commit to weekly rehearsals then this may be just right for you. Why not give it a try? Once all spots are filled, a rehearsal time and day will be selected and the bells will begin ringing once again.

The children’s choirs are continuing to grow. Carol Choir is for age’s pre-K thru kindergarten and the Treble Choir is for children in first thru fifth grade. There are weekly Sunday afternoon rehearsals from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. The children are learning music education basics and worship skills. Both children’s choirs will be singing during the Lent and Easter seasons.

Without the support of music ministry volunteers, much of our music making would not go as smoothly. If you are looking for a way to serve the Lord please consider giving some time to our growing music program. There is always a lot to do and our volunteers are important to our success in building music ministry.

Piano lessons are offered for those interested. Lessons are taught weekly and are available for children in third grade and up, as well as adults. If you are interested I would welcome your call.

There are so many possibilities and opportunities for the St. Matthew’s parish

when it comes to music ministry. We look forward with joy and anticipation at the direction God will lead us in 2010.

Warden's Column

Giving thanks

By Vernon Plack, Senior Warden 2010

I'm Thinking Missions!

For a variety of reasons, my thoughts and prayers lately have been focused on the topic of missions, both for St. Matthews and for me personally. Why is that? Let me share with you the following:

Regarding St. Matthews:

Did you know that two of the four goals of the Long Range Plan (LRP) are focused on reaching outside the walls of St. Matthews? As a reminder, they are:

Goal #3 – To provide opportunities for members of the congregation to share their time, talent and treasure in local community outreach.

Goal #4 – To make visible the mission and ministries of St. Matthew's, as we seek to fulfill God's purpose as a church.

Did you know that despite an extremely challenging economic environment, St. Matthew's generated a meaningful surplus in 2009 (approximately \$100,000)? As a result, your Vestry allocated a significant portion (approx. \$20,000) to a seed fund for a new St. Matthew's ministry that will be directly involved in outreach. Rather than simply providing money to an existing ministry, the goal is to start a new program that will result in direct community involvement by the

members of St. Matthew's. If you have any ideas, please let your Vestry know.

Missions Sunday – We just completed another successful Missions Sunday, thanks to Ken Mills and the other members of the Outreach Committee. During the Sunday School hour, we heard the Rev. Julian Linnell from Anglican Frontier Missions, Larry Shives from Comprehensive Development Project (CODEP) and Susan Sekerke from The Daily Planet describe their organizations and the impact they are making within the local community as well as around the world.

Regarding me personally:

My wife (Gay) and I are prayerfully seeking direction on a local mission that we can both be involved in. While we have done numerous separate ministries through the years, we believe it is important for us to now seek an opportunity that will have us working together. Not only will it be a great way for us to serve the Lord but it should also give us an opportunity to grow as a couple.

At the suggestion of the Rev. Julian Linnell, I recently read a book by Bob Buford called *Halftime: Changing your game plan from success to significance*. The book focuses on moving from a life of success as defined by the world to one of significance as defined by Jesus. As I approach fifty years old, *Halftime* was a good exercise for me in affirming what is most important in my life (Jesus) and a check on making sure I'm living my life with Jesus at the center. Another result is a strong call for me to be more missions oriented.

Another book that I just read was by Fritz Kling, titled *The Meeting of the Waters*, which discusses 7 global currents (mercy, mutuality, migration, monoculture, machines, mediation and memory) that he believes will propel the future church. In particular, how do we most effectively spread the gospel today compared to previous methods, which may not be as effective as they use to be. Fritz' book also caused me to deeply ponder what my role should be in sharing Christ with others in my community and around the world.

Last but not least, my time on the Vestry is coming to an end. With additional time on my hands, I now have the ability to take on something new!

How about you? The Great Commandment (Mark 12: 28 -34) and Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) call us to share Jesus in word and action with our family, friends, neighbors and the world. I encourage each of you to think about a mission field for your life. I also pray that you find a mission that allows you to use your gifts and allows others to see Christ reflected in you.

Youth Ministry

Gabriel Mayer - Youth Minister

It has been a joy to be a part of St. Matthew's. Though I started last September as your new Youth Minister, the goal of our Youth Ministry has remained the same. We strive to learn, enjoy, and trust the depths of Christ's great love for us. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lof-

ty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” *1 Corinthians 2: 1-2, ESV*

In the fall of 2009, the high school and middle school students met weekly for dinners on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, respectively. These weekly meetings served as a time of fellowship and learning, as we studied some of the foundational scriptures in our understanding of “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Striving to learn more about Christ's will for our lives, we have studied Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* in Sunday School. In this sermon, Jesus describes what life in his kingdom looks like. Highlighting our need and his supply, he begins “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew 5:3, ESV*). What good news for us!

In November, we had two events to raise support for our mission's trip this summer. We baked some delicious pecan pies, which we hope you enjoyed, and raffled off a morning of child-labor in our Leaf Racking Raffle.

Though our Christmas caroling was snowed out as many of us were snowed in, our Christmas party was rescheduled. It was a wonderful time as we shared some White Elephant presents and Charlie Brown Christmas cheer.

As the Youth Minister, It has been important to me to spend time with the students. Besides our weekly dinners, I have also been meeting with the high school boys on Thursday mornings to eat bagels and study *Romans*. This year, I have also put in a great deal of preparation for the Feast of Lights. It is my

hope that in all things, the students and I would know nothing “except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Fairmont Mission Trip coming up

The first mission trip planning meeting is set for 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mon., March 22 at All Saints Presbyterian Church, 3000 Grove Ave., Richmond, Va. 23221

Trip dates: July 24th – 31st, 2010. St. Matthew’s and All Saints Presbyterian together are hoping to take about 30 people this year. (Stony Point Presbyterian will be taking a team of about 50 during the same week).

Work Ministry: The primary construction work ministry in Fairmont is working on the homes of people who do not have the time, money, or ability to maintain their homes. Typically they need things like new shingles on the roof, porch or deck rebuilt, work on sheetrock walls, stairs repaired or replaced (there are LOTS of hills in Fairmont), painting, etc. Depending on the construction skills of our team, MTW (Mission to The World, the Presbyterian missions ministry) and our team leaders will match us up with a house(s) to work on that will be within our ability to handle.

Word Ministry: Our primary ministry in this regard will be with the family(ies) who’s home(s) we are working on. There may also be an opportunity to communicate the gospel to some children in the community via *Vacation Bible School* or *Backyard Bible Club*. We will let you know more as soon as we have a definite plan.

Age Range: From rising 10th graders to adults.

Side Trip: (Wednesday afternoon and evening) *To Be Determined*. There are many opportunities in and around Fairmont.

Support: Everyone who goes *will need to send letters* requesting financial & prayer support.

Cost: *About \$525-\$550 each* toward the trip itself (includes MTW costs, construction supplies, lodging, food, ministry supplies, travel), with the *cost of any side trip in addition to that*.

Travel: We will need enough cars and vans to transport people, luggage, tools and other supplies to Fairmont.

Monthly Meetings: *Beginning on March 22, we will meet once a month* for dinner, team relationship building, administrative details, and training (plus the Packing Party!). The packing meeting will be the Thursday evening before we leave (July 22nd), and an after-trip Debriefing meeting/meal will be held a couple weeks after the trip.

Other Needs: *Tetanus immunization, and a willingness to love and serve Christ and His people. (construction experience is a plus)*

Next Step: We will need **your application and a \$50 deposit by Sunday, March 21, 2010**, but sooner than that would be even better. If you want to go, please fill out the application, and return it with your deposit to Gabriel Mayer, Youth Minister. If you have any questions before you can decide, please talk to us about it sooner rather than later.

Can’t Make it But Want to Help? No man, woman, or mission trip team is an island. If you would like to support us and help organize, please contact Gabriel Mayer, Youth Minister.

New book authored by Doug LeBlanc of St. Matthew's

“*Tithing: Test Me in This*,” is a book published by Thomas Nelson and written by Doug. The following came from the Nelson Web site:

Stories of people who live a generous and happy life (and why you'll want to live that way too). Journalist Douglas LeBlanc travels the nation to talk with believers whose lives have been enriched by the ancient spiritual discipline of tithing. He discovers people along the way who do not understand the practice as an onerous law but as God's call to a life of generosity and compassion. The effect on their lives is dramatic. LeBlanc talks with a variety of believers—from a pastor in the south side of Chicago to progressive Episcopalians, from an Orthodox rabbi to an Eastern Orthodox priest and his wife. By holding their gifts with open hands, they are drawn deeper into a life of joy and sharing that begins in the very heart of God.
Volume VII in Thomas Nelson's Ancient Practices series.

The Rev. Mario Gonzalez, Assistant Rector at St. Matthew's, wrote the following review: *I've read 3 chapters, and find it really fascinating. It's not a doctrinal argument (though he touches on that in his introduction) but in-depth interviews with a variety of really exemplary believers whose lives have been shaped by tithing.*

The book is available at Amazon.com.

Children's Education

By Jill Rich, Director of Christian Education

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness -Matthew 9:35

The most difficult part of my studio classes are the demos. For two hours you sit, huddled around the instructor, trying to take notes while she demonstrates a technique. Yuk! Even when the technique is something I'm really excited about, after an hour I start to get restless. But, on the occasions when I'm handed a text to read or have had only a verbal explanation, I generally fail more. By watching my professors, I note not just all they are saying, but also am able to observe all the unconscious actions that make the process a success.

Before Jesus sent out his disciples he modeled the attitude and behaviors he wanted them to have. He prayed to his father in front of them. He healed the sick. He taught to those interested in his message. He didn't say, "Now I want you to go out and teach and heal. Here's a manual. Read it on your way." Believe it or not, he didn't give us an instruction book and expect us to go to it. The Bible is our manual, so to speak. It gives us an account of who God is and what our relationship to him is to be. He has expectations of how we should act if we claim to love him and trust him.

But he has also given us people in our lives to model after, Chuck and Mario for starters, all the historic saints like St. Augustine of Hippo, modern day saints

Elizabeth and James Elliot. Look to the men and women God has placed in your life already as mentors.

The other side of the coin is that our children are watching us. They are learning how to love and share Christ by what we are doing (or not doing). I can order my boys to be generous with each other,

but if I'm hoarding chocolate bars my words are empty and useless. Christ has called us to follow him. What you need to remember is that while you are following him, your children are following you. Right into the arms of their loving father!

2009 Budget Status Final Report – Dec. 31, 2009

	Budget	Actual
Total support	\$665,000	\$772,265
Total expense	\$622,035	\$671,918
<i>Budget vs. Actual income</i>	\$42,965	\$100,346