



# ***THE BEACON***

*THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH*  
**March, 2010**

## ***Father Bill's Message***

Not A Bad Life!

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### ***Every Sunday***

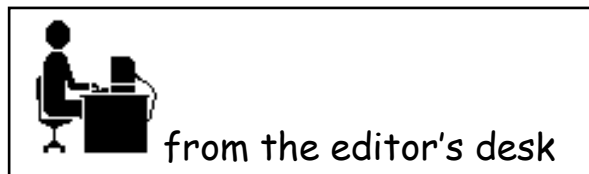
8:00a Holy Eucharist  
9:15a Church School  
9:30a Service w/ Eucharist  
and music

I'm an animal lover. As most of you know, Gail and I are residents of the rectory along with Spencer the Dog and Toby the Cat. Toby for the most part just sheds his fur on a daily basis. Just follow the fur "tumbleweeds" and you'll find him wherever he's sleeping (and he's always just one breath away from falling asleep!). His two active times during the day (morning and evening) are when he comes down to the kitchen for food. Spencer, on the other hand, is more work. He too wants food, but he also wants to be put outside every two to three hours. He wants to go for a walk every afternoon as soon as he finishes his food. If I don't move fast enough in getting my coat on, he sits and barks at me. This bark is, of course, in addition to all the other barks that come from his throat during the day, barks to chase other dogs away from his territory (the yard), or to alert me to danger, such as the postman dropping off the mail, or the oil delivery man topping off the oil tank. It's a tough job to be a dog; there's way too much pressure!

There are times when Spencer and I are one on one, just him and me, and I look into his eyes and I see him looking at me adoringly. It's as if I'm his "god". After all, I do provide food, shelter, and companionship for him! But I'm also affected by his look. It's as if I'm moved to be the kind of person Spencer imagines me to be...gentle, loving,

patient, kind, trustworthy. I wonder how many of us see such attributes in the One we call God? We're always ready to blame God for misfortunes that attach themselves to us, but are we ready to offer him unqualified praise? This Lenten season is really the time for this, to be in God's presence and simply adore God for being our Creator, our Friend, and our Companion through this journey we call life. We can all learn much from a dog about living each day of our existence in God's presence. Play hard. Work hard. Sleep soundly. And enjoy everyone you meet! Not a bad life! Thank you, Lord.

### *Fr. Bill*



I have been getting increasingly frustrated and upset with all the accusations, charges, and nastiness from both sides of the health care debate. But the confrontation seems to be merely symptomatic of a greater malaise affecting Americans. We are getting more and more intolerant of those whose views differ from ours, and more strident in our denunciation of those who don't conform to what we think should be the norm.

These days, If you watch almost any kind of program purporting to be a discussion, you'll soon see that it become a shouting match with no one hearing what the other person is saying. Each person is more concerned with his/her point of view than in listening. What has happened to civilized discourse where we can at least acknowledge that the other person has a legitimate point of view?

Case in point – Recently, a man disgruntled with the IRS, flew his plane into an IRS office building, killing himself and a worker and injuring several others. The pilot left a note detailing a lengthy series of disputes with that organization, and that his action

was designed to alert the public to the unfairness of the IRS. An atypical, irrational act? Not anymore. Unfortunately, such acts are becoming more frequent. Witness the spate of recent incidents where someone walks into a school, post office, psychiatrist's office and kills innocent people. It seems that unbridled violence is the method for venting one's anger. So I can imagine what God must think of all this.

Also prejudice seems to be flourishing of late, particularly directed at Muslims. Humankind has been plagued with prejudice seemingly forever. Far too many folks ascribe the faults of the few to all people of the many. I recently received an e-mail extolling the virtues of a new weapon designed for the US Marines. The e-mail concluded with the distressing statement that it should be used to wipe out all Muslims. Another e-mail recounted information that supposedly anyone who was a Muslim, by faith, should be committed to the death of infidels or anyone who wasn't a Muslim. I was seriously disturbed to think that people were actually thinking this way. But then I remembered my reaction when I was stationed in Savannah, Georgia, in the mid-fifties. The water fountains were labeled "White" and "Colored" as were the lunch counters. There was a street bisecting the city into black and white, not officially, but the understanding was there that one didn't go to the other side of the city at night. I thought it ironic that green money was accepted everywhere, regardless of skin color.

And it seems that criticism of our President has reached new levels of vitriol. I mean, there always has been criticism of our political leaders, but to declare that the President is a Muslim and not a US citizen? Does anyone really believe that there could be a conspiracy to avoid the requirements of the US Constitution? I was recently at a gathering where one of the people there

announced that he had gotten an e-mail that the President had been served with a subpoena to appear before a Federal Court to prove his citizenship. I refrained from commenting that if this was really true, there surely would have been some reporting of this in the media. However, I did not; I knew that any attempt at resorting to reason would be futile. Did anyone ever see an account of this court case?

I just find these ideas are so foreign to what I believe as a Christian. We are enjoined by the Bible to "love one another as ourselves." I don't recall reading anything that says we should hate or try to destroy those who don't believe as we do. What must God think of all this?

Recently I read the following in *The Message* bible, *Psalm 31, vs 14-15* which shows that David was writing about similar concerns:

Bullies brandish their swords,  
pull back on their bows with a flourish.  
They're out to beat up on the harmless,  
or mug that nice man out walking his  
dog.

A banana peel lands them flat on their faces  
slapstick figures in a moral circus.

The following is a statement I've used before, but I think it's appropriate at this time: "A society is at its peak when most of its people practice their own particular code of good manners. The society starts to crumble when more and more people abandon those rules of propriety." A loose translation of line written in the first century AD by philosopher Li Chi. We seem to be approaching this point. Courtesy and manners are old-fashioned; the common view seems to be, "It's all about ME!"

I am so thankful that St. Stephen's provides a place where I can be re-affirmed in my beliefs, a place where I can find an

atmosphere of welcome and peace. Thank you, St. Stephen's.  
Peace,

*frp*



## Bulletin Board

**The next Vestry Meeting** will be held on Monday, March 15th, at 7:00pm. All vestry meetings are open to the entire parish. Parishioners wishing to include items on the agenda are asked to contact one of the wardens or the rector no later than two (2) weeks before the meeting. Vestry meeting agendas and minutes will be regularly posted on the bulletin board between Fay Hall and the narthex.

★ For the Lenten season, we'll once again have **Wednesday soup and bread suppers at 6:00 PM**, beginning on **February 24<sup>th</sup> and continuing through March 24<sup>th</sup>**. Each supper will be followed by a short program entitled, "Prayers of the Passion". The specific sessions will be "Why Have You Forsaken Me?", "Father, Forgive Them", "Jesus, Remember Me", "Into Your Hands", and "Simon, I Have Prayed for You". Come and give them a try!! Sign up sheets are now posted in the narthex for the suppers. One sheet indicates your attendance; the other is for volunteers to bring either soup or bread. Please help in this regard.

★ The **Women of Faith Bible Study** Groups have resumed our regular twice a month schedule. Please mark these dates on your calendars:

Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> 7:15 P.M. at *Jean McPherson's home*

Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> 9:00 A. M. at *Phyl Endicott's home*

We meet for approximately 2 hours and each meeting is preceded by coffee and a snack. For directions or more information contact *Jean* at 508-355-2022 or *Phyl* at 508-366-9227. Our summer hiatus will start the first of June and continue through the summer.

★ **We now have a meditation room** (in place of the old library) with items brought back from the Lawton Chapel at Bement. Several of those items were either made or donated by parishioners here at *St. Stephen's* in memory of the *Rev. Jack and Nancy Lawton*. Please feel free to use the room for prayer, thinking, and rest.

★ A basic **Safe Church training** session for both church employees and volunteers will be held on **Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>** at *St. John's Church* in North Adams. The session will be from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM, cost \$25.00, and includes lunch. The deadlines for registration is April 17<sup>th</sup>. Registration forms are available at [www.diocesewma.org/parish\\_matters/safechurch.html](http://www.diocesewma.org/parish_matters/safechurch.html)

★ Many thanks to the volunteers, *Bob Lewis, Elaine Sanborn, Ruth Beck,* and the Friday Friends (*Liz Moss, Ruth Flemming, Fran Sellar, Isobel Shapleigh, and Don Shapleigh*) who covered the office and answering the telephone while I was away on vacation. *Nancy Harris*

★ We invite you to join us for the fourth annual **Westborough Interfaith Community Concert**. The *Unitarian Universalist Church* is hosting the event **Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 PM**. There is a lot of talent in Westborough. Last year consisted of choral arrangements sung by Westborough choirs and various other performances including a saxophone quartet and a flute choir. It's going to be a great afternoon, well-spent.

Proceeds of the concert are for the benefit of the *Assabet Valley Pastoral Counseling Center* here in town. Tickets are \$12, (\$8 for seniors) and can be purchased ahead of time or at the concert. Please join us for an afternoon of fun and enjoyment with beautiful music. Contact *Cam Sowa* (508-366-4572) or email her at [cam.sowa@att.net](mailto:cam.sowa@att.net) with any questions or to purchase tickets.

★ Thanks to all of you who continue to support the Westborough Food Pantry. Their needs have continued to increase. Each week the number of families asking for help sets a new record. They are now serving over twice the numbers that they did a year ago. In addition to the usual basic food items, they need crackers, cookies, and cake mixes. They also need personal care items such as soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc. If you have questions about what is needed, please see *Don Shapleigh*.

★ Just a reminder that both rentals and church events should be cleared with *Fred Philcox* (508-393-6858) so that time and space is available to all groups, and that the parish facilities are not overbooked. Please talk with *Fred*

BEFORE you put any event on the calendar in the office. Thank you for your understanding.

- ★ Many, many thanks to the parish family for the support and donations for the Valentine care packages. Thank you for the yummy candy, delicious homemade cookies and breads, warm fuzzy notes and prayers; to the children and youth for their beautiful handmade cards; to all who helped assemble the packages and to those who delivered them. We know the packages are much appreciated by all who receive them. Bless you all. *Yvette Kite*
- ★ If you wish to **donate to ERD's Haiti Fund**, visit [www.er-d.org](http://www.er-d.org) or call 1-800-334-7626, ext. 5129. Gifts can be mailed to Episcopal Relief and Development, P.O. Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058. Please put "Haiti Fund" in the memo line of all checks.

**Many thanks** to all of you for trying a Taize service on Sunday evening and, for the last few months, at 9:30 am on the fifth Sunday. After a careful evaluation and discussion among members of the executive committee, it has been determined that there is simply not enough interest among the congregation to continue the practice. I'm very grateful for the frank and honest feedback, and I wish to especially thanks all those who have given their time to lead the music portion of these services. Rite Two Holy Eucharist will now be the standard at both services on the fifth Sunday of the month.

*Fr. Bill*

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## Church Growth

Mathew's Gospel ends with these words of Jesus: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always, to the end of time." Immediately after recognizing the "Great commission", the next thought that crosses our minds is often, "I know I should be accomplishing the Great Commission, but I Can't seem to get past the first word...Go." Yet we go all the time. We go to work, go out to eat, go to the movies, go to bed. But we all know that Jesus' "go" carries with it a different connotation. It means we have to agree to action. It means we have to accept a little risk and stick one foot in front of the other to engage with another human being, having no idea where it all will lead. Statistically, only 10% of any congregation would raise their hands if asked who has the formal gift of evangelism. This means that there's a substantial number of believers whose "go" desire is perpetually stuck in "stay"

"Just Walk Across the Room: The Four Week Experience" is a campaign designed to give parishioners a fresh understanding of what "evangelism" really means, as well as a dose of inspiration regarding how to get it done.

We need to grow here at *St. Stephen's*; 87% of newcomers walk through the church doors because they have been invited by lay people (you!) who are their friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Can you give eight hours or less of your time to attend just four sessions as follows:

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

(a pause for Holy Week, then...)

Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

Thanks,

*Fr. Bill*

## Prayerful Notes

I recently heard an interesting quote from St. John of the Cross, a mystical theologian and poet, who lived in the 1500's. The quote is ; "Whoever falls while heavily laden, will find it difficult to rise under the burden."

While this sounds negative in it's content, a spiritual acquaintance interpreted this as meaning that we must build ourselves up spiritually. If we have a firm foundation of faith, we can rise above the burdens that lifemay bring us.

I found this intriguing and on further reflection, saw that it held special meaning for me because of my own life experience. It was nine years ago this month, that I began life as a single person, after 38 years of marriage.

I once heard someone say that most love stories end in tragedy, either through death or divorce. However it happens, it is one of the most life changing experiences that a person can go through.

Due to a series of painful circumstances, my only child also exited my life at that same time. I had married young, going from my parent's house to a home with my husband. My life experiences were sorely lacking. One thing I did have was a strong faith in God. That is what I held onto and what brought me through. God was like a life preserver for me, as I rode through a sea of loss, confusion, pain and uncertainty.

Jesus said ; "I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you", John 14 : 18. He brought me comfort in the words of scripture, in the loving support of dear friends and the love and prayers of my St. Stephen's family. I had many challenges but the Lord led me through each one.

I once heard a preacher on TV say, "When God removes someone from your life, he raises you to a new level." When I look at the person I am today, compared to the person I was nine years ago, I see the truth in that statement.

I am so grateful for the foundation of faith that I received as a child, for it has carried me through to a wonderful new life.

My life was heavily laden but through God's grace, I was able to rise up from under the burden and rebuild my life, on the strong foundation of my faith.

Today I have a warm and loving relationship with my daughter and the added blessing of a very special son-in-law. I can readily relate to the verse in Job 42 : 12a, "The Lord blessed the later part of Job's life more than the first."

God always exceeds our expectations!

Blessings Always,

*Phyl Endicott*

**Attention:** Alumni, campers, Staff, and Friends of Bement!

The Children of Bement are looking for their camp friends to come and help us as we work to save this sacred place. Come to: [savebement.org](http://savebement.org) and see what has been done so far and what is coming. By signing up you will receive our newsletters and other news as it breaks.

If you do not have internet you can contact us at:

Email: [BementAlum@hotmail.com](mailto:BementAlum@hotmail.com)

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