



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
September, 2009

Father Bill's Message

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Every Sunday

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

The Five Ongoing Tasks of A Church - How Are We Doing?

Every few years every congregation should review how well it's doing in the following areas:

1. Coming to Terms with History: How well do we acknowledge the past and come to terms with (accepting) what was good and bad? How well do we decide what is important and indispensable to carry into the future?

2. Discovering Our Identity and Deciding Whether a New Identity is Necessary: Is our image of ourselves realistic? Do we create and utilize opportunities for growth and renewal?

3. Leadership Decisions: Is our decision making healthy, realistic and open? Is there a wide ownership of decisions? Do we honor past lay leaders and look for ways for them to stay involved?

4. The Larger Denomination: Do we have a healthy partnership with the Diocese? Is the relationship based on trust and a shared mission?

5. Committing to New Directions: Is there clarity and consensus, even excitement about a vision for the future?

How do you think we're doing?

Fr. Bill



In the 16 years that I have been doing the *Beacon*, I have collected a very thick folder of what I have labeled “*Beacon Resources*. In it are all sorts (and conditions) of things that I have collected and others have sent to me that I can use as fillers or – on some occasions- use as columns when my brain has dried up. Anyway, I digress.

I have become increasingly agitated, upset, angry over the recent debate over health care. I don't disagree with people's right to have opinions one way or another. I respect their right to share their thoughts with others. But I just can't understand why people feel they can get right in someone else's face and scream at them with vitriolic statements that do nothing to further understanding.

I'm not taking sides here; I'm just making an observation. We seem to have lost totally the idea of civil discourse. I know if someone gets in my face and starts yelling, I have one of two reactions. I either try to walk away, or I stand there and listen, getting angry myself. In either case I pay little if any attention to the point that the other person is trying to make, and I certainly am not likely to be persuaded that they are right.

I've been thinking about this lack of civility and have come to the conclusion that it's nothing new. When Sharyn and I were in Ephesus a couple of years ago, we visited an amphitheater where Paul went to speak to the Ephesians. He could not because he was shouted down by a large group of agnostics and had to abandon his speech. He was able to bring his message of Christ at a later date.

And then I thought about other occasions when I imagine that debate got rather heated. Think about the beginnings of our country and the acts and words that brought about the American revolution. Surely those wishing to

remain a colony and those who favored freedom did not indulge in civil discourse. “I say, old boy, let's go down and dump some tea in Boston Harbor to show our displeasure.” I think not.

Certainly the war in Vietnam occasioned displays of strong feelings. Protests, demonstrations, marches on this place or that marked how strongly people felt, and how quickly they could resort to violence.

But what led me into this line of thinking was an item I remembered I had in my resource folder. I have had item for at least fifteen years; never used it before, but it has been on my mind off and on for many years.

The Worcester *Sunday Telegram* used to have a section they called “Potpourri” which was a collection of random thought from a variety of sources. The one that has stuck with over the years has been this one. “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 of its people abandon those rules of propriety. This is a loose translation of lines written by the Chinese Li Chi in his “Book of Rites” during the first century A.D.”

I wonder where we are on this time line. I wonder what God makes of all this. Does he just shake head in bemusement? Does he wonder if it's time to step in and put an end to this nonsense. Or does he say, “Let's see what happens this time.”

We really seem to have difficulty remembering and obeying the commandment to love one another as we love ourselves. I've started to ramble, so let me end by saying thanks for listening.

Peace

frp



Announcing

The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, September 21, 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.

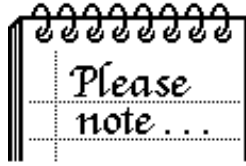
Altar Guild is in need of a few good people!!! Altar Guild finds itself short some worker bees due to some of our more experienced members moving on to other things. This leaves some holes in each team...holes that need to be filled. If anyone is interested in this valuable ministry please contact me, either at church or by phone (508-898-2513). This ministry involves one weekend a month...Saturday morning for an hour or so to do cleaning and prepare for the Sunday services, then on Sunday to clean up from the services. There are plenty of experienced workers who will be happy to help you learn the ropes. Please give this some consideration so that we may start the fall season with full teams. Thanks so much. *Diane Barrette*, Altar Guild Directress

★ While you are away on vacation this summer, you can still keep up on the weekly readings, prayers, and announcements. The Sunday Bulletin and Announcements are posted on our website each week on the Services Page www.ststeph.com/services in a downloadable PDF format.

★ We will be returning to our **two service format on Sunday, September 13th**. Because of the extensive repair work needed in the basement, the opening of church school may be delayed for a week or two, or it may be temporarily held in

rooms on this floor. Thanks for your understanding.

- ★ *Diane Barrette* will be handling all aspects of the altar flowers from now on. Please record your information on the flower chart on the bulletin board in the narthex. Then put the envelope with the date you have chosen, the dedication, and your check for the flowers in *Diane's* in-box which is just outside the church office. If you have questions about the flowers, please call *Diane* at 508-898-2513.
- ★ The **Women of Faith** bible study group will be starting up again, probably in October. More information will be coming soon.
- ★ The Communications Group's Used Book Shelves in Fay Hall are a way to recycle our books and enjoy our church community by sharing with each other. Please bring in any books you would like to donate and check the shelves for any books you might be interested in reading. A basket is on the shelves for free-will donations.
- ★ At its last meeting, the Vestry selected one of four bidders to renovate the church basement. Work began this past Wednesday and it is hoped that the majority of the renovations will be completed within a month or so. Please feel free to view what has already been accomplished.



**New Date for Fall Marketplace!!!!
Saturday, October 17, 2009**

Preparations are well underway for the church fair to be held in October this year. Most of the committees have chairpersons BUT there are still a couple of blank spaces that could be filled with your name!!! Check out the list in Fay Hall.

The craft meetings are being held every other Wednesday through September and early October. September 9 and 23 and October 7 are the scheduled dates although we may add additional dates as the time draws closer to the fair.

Several folks have taken "craft kits" to work on at home. I will be providing more of these over the next few weeks. I'm looking for folks who enjoy sewing but don't have the time to attend the craft meetings.

We're also looking for knitted items, Christmas tree ornaments, quilts, seasonal home decorations (Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas), aprons, pocketbooks, etc, etc. Use your creativity and create something for the fair....

If sewing or doing crafts is "not your thing," you might also consider making a donation towards the cost of our craft materials.

We'll be accepting items for the yard sale in late September, early October as well as items for "Gramma's Attic" and the jewelry table.

Watch for more fair details to come to see how you can contribute....And remember the date, Saturday, October 17.

For questions, call Sharyn Philcox at 508-393-6858.

Prayerful Notes

In July I returned to Adelynrood, an Episcopal Retreat and Conference Center, located on the north shore, for my annual retreat. It is such a beautiful spot, with its acres of lush green lawns and beautiful, spacious gardens. Having grown up on the north shore, I must admit I am also drawn in by the smell of nearby salt marshes. Peace and serenity just envelope you, as you walk through the entrance of that holy place. I always have a feeling of coming home.

This particular retreat was entitled, "God is a New Language." It was led by Rev. Martin Smith, a well-known author and retreat leader. While I was not familiar with his writings, obviously a lot of others were. Normally we have about 25 people on a retreat there, this time we had 70! All the rave reviews I had heard about him proved true.

A spirited and often humorous Englishman, he shared this spiritual insights with us and challenged us to see God in new ways in our lives. Each presentation by him was followed by small group sharings. Together we shared personal images for God that we saw that were relevant to our current time period.

The writers of the Bible used beautiful images to describe God, such as God as a mighty fortress or Jesus as the good shepherd. These were very familiar images to the people of Biblical times yet not so to us in this time and place.

In our groups we saw God in modern day images such as: God as a compass, giving direction to our life, God as the Re-Potter helping us to grow, God as the emergency number, who you could always call on and God as the crossing guard to lead us at the intersections of our lives. I shared that at a particularly painful time of my life, I had seen God as a life preserver. My strength depleted, I just held on, till he brought me to higher ground.

We were amazed at the variety of every day images that we came up with. As we shared seeing God in familiar images, it felt like we had gone to another dimension in our spiritual journey. We can tend to limit our spiritual growth, by getting lost in our religiosity.

One of the things that Martin said that really struck a chord with me (no pun intended) was "Play all the keys on the piano."

To grow in our faith, we need to explore all avenues that can lead us closer to God, not just the familiar. For instance, while I love the beautiful language of the King James Bible, I have found the newer translations, now available, have been more helpful in my study of the Bible. The modern language has given me greater clarity and made it easier to understand. In addition, both my Student Bible and my Study Bible contain helpful notes that further aid my understanding.

We are ever changing; our church is ever changing and I believe God wants us to accept and embrace changes that are for the good. As we do, we are ever mindful that , Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. *Hebrews 13: 8.*

Blessings Always,

Phyl Endicott

Is it well with you?

September – October is a busy time of year for us all as we transition from the lazy days of summer and move in to back-to-school, new programs and all the Fall activities that keep us on the go for the next two months. Personally, I love the Fall especially in our beloved New England. Crisp autumnal days, country fairs, new books, fresh curriculum. And so it is with our Parish. Much being done and much to be done. At the same time, it's an opportunity to review the year that is already well along and to examine where we have been and what we have done. And think about what the Lord might be calling us to do.

At this point in the church year we try to stop running and spend a little prayer and reflection time on the health of the parish and ourselves and when I use the term health, I mean spiritual and temporal. In this period of economic malaise which is affecting every single one of us, it is hard not to focus on our own situation to the exclusion of others. So I'm looking forward as your Every Member Canvass Chair for this year to spending time with each and every one of you in getting out of my own narrow perspective and enjoying the sharing we have in store. That will be heard through the lay witness series that will take place in the next couple of months.

Now that's just one aspect of EMC this year. Another is the parish-wide endeavor to reach out to everyone. That reaching out can occur in many different ways. It may be that you'll want to be a visitor or it may be you'd like a visit. If you prefer to talk in a group, then there's a All Parish Supper in store on Saturday, October 24th and you can share over food in true Episcopalian style then! Hopefully, everyone will get a chance to share why we love this parish and what it stands for so much.

So what's this all about? Well it's about you and me and the Lord. No, it's not just to get you to sign a pledge card, even though that's an important piece of parish business to accomplish. It's much more important for all of us to take the time during this period to do some real heart searching about what God has done for us, how much He loves each one of us and what you might decide you can do to enrich your life by responding to His call. Those matters are, I know, very personal. It's God and you, you and God. In any event, I implore you to not dismiss this opportunity to spend the time in reflection – in prayer – in asking God to enter your life and have you become conscious of what He is calling you and me to do, where He wants to lead us and how we can respond.

During the months of September and October up to the 25th, will you agree to put aside your preconceptions, to thank God for what He has done for you and to listen for what God is calling you to do? We are the Body of Christ in this place – stop – look – listen.

God's blessing to each one of you and for us all and thanks for your consideration and participation in the next two months.

Tim Moss

EMC Chair - 2009

Connections IV

August 15, 2009

By *Marsha Platt*

So far we have talked about energy, balance, wellness, meditation and prayer, left and right brain, peace and compassion. All of these are connected. All of these affect how we live and understand our universe. To survive, we often compromise parts of who we are. Sometimes it is easier to remain silent than speak out against injustice. To be clear about who we are, we need to understand our world. Our universe has two parts: reality and spirituality. Let us look at some patterns.

While tending my garden, one day, I was able to connect with a simple truth. Everything has a system. If you understand the system, you understand how that process works. This is a simple pattern, insight by chance. While I was not specifically trying to meditate, the left-brain was busy at work making me pick up stones, leveling the soil and other menial tasks preparing my garden. My right-brain was free to communicate. Vacuuming is another one of those tasks that allows the right-brain to wander. Vacuuming is pretty repetitive and the left-brain is good at remembering those tasks. The left-brain is vision and history. It is knowledge and skills. The right-brain is the

present. It is beauty; it is nature. It is as we see things with our heart.

So our brain has two parts too. I suggest the left-brain is comfortable in reality, while the right-brain connects with spirituality.

In our busy everyday life we have lots of conflicts: up, down; left, right; yes, no; right, wrong. They are all visible and easy to understand. But when we get to reality vs. spirituality, there is less understanding.

Heinz Pagels, an American Physicist (1939-1988) wrote in 1982 that "The visible world is neither matter nor spirit but the invisible organization of energy". Bobby Matherne, another physicist reviewed Pagels' work in 2003 and wrote; "The visible world is both matter and spirit, the manifestation of which appears as an organization of energy". Here are two prominent physicists writing conflicting theories of energy.

Earlier, J. Goethe, a German writer (1749-1832) wrote that the spiritual world came first and everything we see in the material world was organized in accordance with the spiritual. A world that is not perceptible to the sense, but very real nevertheless.

Matherne goes on to discuss that material reality is the sensory world that we can measure. Think of a complex water solution. You introduce a chemical that changes the chemistry to produce a physically observable stuff that precipitates out and sinks. No one denies that tiny particles were there from the beginning. We just couldn't see them until they coalesced. If you believe a physical (chemical) change can occur so that we can see what was there, even though originally it was invisible, can you believe in the invisible organization of energy? This is the divine matrix (Braden).

Some humans can see that which others cannot see. The human body contains instruments of

cognition for which no man-made instruments exist. The book *The Field* describes many of these phenomenons.

Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian Philosopher (1861-1925) was such a man. He could consciously access the super-sensible world or energy fields. He could see auras hovering over people. When one tries to describe the spiritual world with sensible perceptions by using tricks such as automatic writing, few are convinced. Steiner developed Anthroposophy to help people understand what he could "see". One needs to fully use thinking, feeling and willing to grasp Steiner's concepts. Not dissimilar to the lesson on August 16 from Ephesians, Chapter 5. Paul admonished them to be careful how you live: be wise, understand the will of the Lord and be filled with spirit. Steiner felt that restricted thinking or rational thinking would never see the spiritual world. We need both.

Human consciousness goes beyond the laws of physics, because those laws carefully exclude investigations in the spiritual realm. Most physicists do not believe the spiritual realm exists at all, because they do not know how to measure it or have instruments that do so. (again see *The Field*.)

On behalf of the Westborough Food Pantry, On behalf of the Westborough Food Pantry, thanks to all of you who have continued to provide support through your weekly donations. Their needs are continuing to increase. I was recently told that they are now serving over twice the number of families from a year ago. This requires them to purchase items that in the past were fully available through donations. All extra donations will be greatly appreciated.

In addition to the usual basic food items they have a need for crackers, cookies and cake mixes. They also need personal care items such as soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.

But we know the spiritual world exists. We each know incidents of divine intervention, or divine grace being given. We know people whose lives have been changed by conversations with God. If we are open and listening to God we will discover much. If we follow the commandment to love thy neighbor as thyself, remember loving our self comes first. If we can love our selves and act from love we will feel and see clearly the energy that connects us. Remember the story of the fox in the book *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de SaintExupery? As the price prepares to return to his planet, the fox shares a secret. "Goodbye" said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye".

Bibliography

The Field by Lynne McTaggart, Harper, 2002
The Divine Matrix, by Gregg Braden, Hay House, 2007
Love Without End by Glenda Green, Spiritis, 2006
The Cosmic Code by Heinz Pagels, Simon & Schuster, 1982 and review by Bobby Matherne, 2003, on line at A Quantum Reality Review

For those of you who reside in other communities and prefer to support your local food pantry, I'm sure that their needs have also increased. If you don't care to donate to the Westborough Food Pantry please consider donating to the one in your town.

Thanks

Don Shapleigh

thanks to all of you who have continued to provide support through your weekly donations. Their needs are continuing to increase. I was recently told that they are now serving over twice the number of families from a year ago. This requires them to purchase items that in the past were fully

available through donations. All extra donations will be greatly appreciated.

At our Easter celebration with the boys at DYS, Several boys shared poems that they had written as a way of expressing their feelings. I have included two this month and will put more in succeeding issues of the *Beacon*. [ed.]

Jonathan L. writes:

The Fear of Success

The conflict between what one is and what one is expected to be touches all of us. And sometimes, rather than reach for what one could be, we choose the comfort of the failed role, preferring to be the victim of circumstance, the person who didn't have a chance.

From *Evan B.*

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.