



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

June, 2009

Father Bill's Message

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH
Westborough, MA 01581
(508) 366-4134, *Office*
(508) 366-9063, *Rectory*
fax: (508) 616-0820
e-mail: frbilmrtn@aol.com
www.ststeph.com

The Rev. William Martin
Rector
Nancy Harris
Administrative Assistant
Marla Farrow
Organist/Choir Director
Fred Philcox
Beacon Editor
Dick Cerasuolo
Sexton

Every Sunday

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

Melissa Gregory remembered the phone call from Dr. Bean like it was yesterday. Could it really be a year ago? And what a year. Her husband Carl had been so sick. Nothing the doctors tried seemed to work on the cancerous growth. Carl was in and out of the hospital all year. They were a lonely pair trudging off to ever new venues of healing--healing that never came. It had been a year from hell, and now that hell was over. Carl had died at last. And now she was a home--alone.

As Melissa wandered aimlessly around the Gregory home the night of the funeral, she didn't know what to do. It was as if she was lost in the caverns of her own home. Several times she tried to pray. It was the same thing each time. She could find no words to pray. She didn't know what to say to God. She didn't know how to pray in this dire moment. She could only sigh and groan...that's all she had for God now. It was as if she had forgotten how to pray. She could only hope that God could make something out of her groanings--if indeed there was a God at all.

(from "56 Stories for Preaching", by Richard Jensen)

This story describes a condition that is painfully familiar to every one of us. St. Teresa called it "the dark night of the soul". It's a time of spiritual dryness often brought on by intense tragedy, but not only by that. It is a sense of sudden darkness which has fallen upon those who have walked in the light of faith for years. It's a dismaying experience suddenly to find God's presence absent for a time. And why does God allow this to happen? Some theologians believe that God wishes to remind us

that we can never be good, faithful and loving for a single minute on our own. It is only by God's grace that we live and love. Other theologians believe that this spiritual dryness is brought on by fatigue--both physical and emotional--which results from caring about others. Obviously, this would apply to Jensen's story. Still other theologians state that the dark night of the soul is necessary to preserve free will. George MacDonald, a 19th Century Scottish clergyman, once wrote, "God does not, by the instant gift of his spirit, make us always feel right, desire good, love purity, aspire after him and his will. He wants to make us in his own image, choosing the good, refusing the evil. How does he effect this if he were always moving us from within, as he does at divine intervals?"

Have you experienced periods of spiritual dryness? What did you do about it?

Fr. Bill



from the editor's desk

St. Stephen's has had an outreach ministry with the Secure Treatment section of the Department of Youth Services at Westborough State Hospital more than, almost, somewhere around 20 years. The program has been coordinated for many of those years by our own Gail Hnatiow. Parishioners from the church visit the boys three times a year: Easter, Fourth of July, and Christmas. We bring gifts, letters of encouragement, what it means to be a citizen depending on the holiday we're celebrating. We provide a program and music for the boys, and for the last few years, the boys have prepared a presentation for us. They enjoy our

coming, and almost everyone from St. Stephen's remarks that they take as much away from our visits as anything we may bring to the boys. Many parishioners are a little hesitant at first, not knowing what it's like to visit boys who are basically incarcerated. Not to worry. I'll share with you what my son David said when he accompanied Sharyn and me for a Christmas visit when he was a young teenager. He was very quiet in the car on the way home. Finally he spoke. "Those kids aren't so different from me." We discussed this a bit, saying that except for their particular circumstances they were much like David.

It's a heartening ministry in several ways. Parishioners know they are making a difference in the lives of these young men. It's uplifting to see how many of the boys have a deep spiritual component in their lives. And you should hear them sing! Not always tuneful, but never lacking in enthusiasm. They love the song "All in All." We end every visit with it.

I'd like to share with you my Easter experience this year. After we had our program, the boys presented a reading showing some possible rational explanations for Jesus' resurrection, about why it was a trick, or hallucination, or a plot by the disciples. One of the boys read the part of a lawyer whose task was the judge on the probability of the explanation. None adequately explained the Resurrection. At the end of the reading each of the characters were present at Jesus' ascension and concluded that the biblical account was the real explanation.

There was some time left so we spent some time just talking with the boys. I wound up talking to Matt, a young man I had met at Christmas time. We started by chatting about thing in general. We discovered that we both liked to fish. Somehow or other, we got to talking religion. Matt asked some questions that showed he had spent much time reading

his bible. He went to his room and came back with a bible that showed he had, indeed, spent many hours reading. Sections were bracketed, lines were underlined, there were question marks in the margins. The conversation got pretty intense. At one point, I silently asked, "Lord, is this a test?" Matt asked some probing questions that had me examining my faith.

Next, Matt brought out a small handbook that also showed signs of heavy use. It was a kind of handbook of Catholicism that explained the tenets of that faith in terms a teenager could understand. More questions, more discussion. Then at one point, Matt asked me if we could pray some of the prayers in this book. We read several together, ending with the Lord's prayer.

Our time together ended and we said our goodbyes. Matt hopes to be out this June so I'll probably not see him again, but I can tell you this; his impact on me will last a long time. So much from someone so young. Thanks, Matt. May God be with you.

There was a disappointing aspect to our visit; only four parishioners attended this session. And so I ask you, "Can you spare a couple of hours three times a year to meet with these young men?"

You'll come away with a great appreciation for these boys and maybe, even, a sense of fulfillment that you hadn't anticipated. God bless you all,

frp



The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, June 15, 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.

IHN (Interfaith Hospitality Network) will be bring their transitional families to stay here at *St. Stephen's* from **June 21 to June 28** (the Congregational Church will host them here from June 28 to July 5). Look for sign up sheets in May. Thanks! *Wendy Scharen*

One of our **parishioners needs a ride each month to Boston** for a doctor's appointment. If you can help, please e-mail *Brian Swartz* at bj.swartz@verizon.net or call him at 508-485-5338.

Save the date- - - - **June 14th** after the 9:30 service we are having a **St Stephen's Cookout!** We'll provide the burgers and dogs, just bring a side or dessert to share.

Our first **Fall Fair Committee Meeting** will be held on **Tuesday, June 16th** at **7:00 PM in Fay Hall**. Please come and bring your ideas as we begin planning for this year's fall fair. For questions, call *Sharyn Philcox* at 508-393-6858.

For those of you doing early summer planning: we will be going to a **single service** at **9 AM**, beginning on **Sunday, June 21st**, and continuing through **Sunday, Sept. 6th**.

Nancy Harris will be taking a week of vacation from Wednesday, July 1st, through Tuesday, July 7th. The church office will be

closed Friday, July 3rd, for the Independence Day Holiday. Would someone or someones please volunteer to keep the office open and answer phones from at least 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM on **July 1st, July 2nd, and July 6th**?

Don Shapleigh's "little red wagon" would appreciate being filled with canned goods and non-perishables for the **Westborough food pantry**. The country is experiencing a significant increase in the number of families who need help putting food on the table. You can be sure that your donations will be appreciated and put to good use.

Several members each Sunday mention to *Fr. Bill* or the vestry person of the day the name of someone they wish placed on the **bulletin prayer list**. To make sure that either person doesn't forget, can you please write down the name(s) and hand the paper to them? It would also be great if you would write on that paper how long you would like the name included in the bulletin. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Vacation time is fast approaching. If you are unable to serve as scheduled in May and June, PLEASE find a replacement or switch with someone and then let me know. Please keep in mind that there are 41 people who serve on the Liturgical Ministry in various capacities so this makes scheduling a daunting task. Your cooperation in finding your own replacement or switching with someone will be very much appreciated. If you could let me know when you will be **unavailable** during July and August for the **Liturgical Ministry, Vestry Person of the Day**, and the after service **Coffee Hour for July and August**, it will make the scheduling much easier and less messy for both you and me since we can avoid a lot of crossing out and writing in. It will also help because you won't need to find a substitute to fill in for you. You can put a note in my in-box, send me an e-mail at ststephch@aol.com or call me at 508-366-4134, which ever you prefer.

Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation in this matter. *Nancy Harris*

Mission & Outreach collected items for the **Francis Perkins House** in Worcester through the month of May. *The Francis Perkins House* is dedicated to providing transitional housing and programs to teach independent living to homeless women and their children. The following items were collected: diapers (infant to toddler), baby shampoo, lotions and wipes, new and gently used clothing infant to age 6.

Vestry Members: Please don't forget that we will be having a retreat on **Saturday, June 6th from 9 AM to 2 PM** at Kirkside. Archdeacon *Bill Coyne* will be leading us in the topic of "Growing A Church".

For your spiritual health, come visit the **Labyrinth** built by *Logan Scharen* for his Eagle Scout project. It's behind the church and it's beautiful. Visit it anytime; bring your friends.

Prayerful Notes

I always enjoy watching Antiques Road Show on Channel 2. It features professional Antique dealers and people, who bring old items to them to be appraised. It is amazing to see the valuable hidden treasures, often passed down from another generation, that people have had in their homes, having no idea of their value.

Within this past year, I also discovered a hidden treasure, in my home. No, it was not an antique but it is an item of even greater value, it is The Book of Common Prayer.

I received my first Prayer Book when I was confirmed at the age of thirteen. I saw it as a special memento of my Confirmation Day. I brought it home and placed it on a shelf but sadly, I rarely opened it.

While I have always loved the richness of our liturgy and the beautiful prayers in the

Prayer Book, somehow I held them in reserve for Sunday morning services. I rarely thought to use them during the week. While I spent a lot of time in prayer, my prayers were always more informal, conversational type prayers.

As I grew in my faith, I began to explore the Bible in depth, however the Prayer Book remained relatively unexplored territory for me, for quite a while.

Eventually, I took a short course in the Prayer Book and the process of discovery began. I found a beautiful section at the back with prayers for all different occasions or needs. I discovered services I had not heard of before, like the ones for personal daily devotions or the Reconciliation of a Penitent (confession).

About 7 years ago, I made my first retreat at Adelynrood, an Episcopal Retreat Center in Byfield, Mass. Since then I have returned every summer for retreat. I love the holy routine that is followed there. We rise early and begin each day with The Service of Morning Prayer. Each lunch time is preceded by Noontime Intercessions and each evening concludes with The Service of Compline. All of these beautiful services come from our Book of Common Prayer.

More and more, I began turning to my Prayer Book. I also came upon a very helpful book called *In Constant Prayer* by Robert Benson. In it he gives helpful advise on how to establish a holy routine, by praying the Daily Office at least once a day. The Daily Office is a service of various kinds of prayers, which also include the scriptures for the day. The service of Morning Prayer is one of the Daily Offices. His book also includes a shortened version of Morning Prayer.

A quick and easy way to find the scripture readings for the day is to pick up a *Forward Day by Day* booklet, in the track rack in the Narthex.

I have been praying the Daily Office every morning for quite a while now. It is a holy discipline, something I do for myself but more importantly for God. It has become the foundation of my prayer time. Then I


continue on with my more informal personal prayers.

This practice had enhanced my prayer life so much, I just wanted to share it with you.

Whether you are a "cradle Episcopalian" or a newcomer to our faith, discover the hidden treasure that awaits you in the Book of Common Prayer. It's not just for Sunday morning services.

Blessings Always,

Phyl Endicott



Congratulations!

Amber Gross

Graduating from Westborough High School. She will attend McGill University in the fall.

Melissa Brady

Graduating from Westborough High School. She Will attend Quinsigamond Community College in the fall.

Melissa Catalozzi

Graduating from Grafton High School. She will attend Suffolk University, Boston, in the fall with a Major in French and a Minor in Business

Sean McKenzie

Graduating from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Science in Economics.

Welcome Jesus

I have been reading a favorite text again as is my wont. This time it's Kathleen Norris' *Amazing Grace* which I find grabs me now just as much as the first time I read it some ten years ago. The piece that caught my

attention this day is in a chapter she labels “Church”. It’s full of spiritual nuggets but what hit home with me on this reading is her talking about unhealthy patterns in congregations. Here’s a short quote to help you tune in to what I’m talking about:

“From the outside, church congregations can look remarkably contentious places, full of hypocrites who talk about love while fighting each other tooth and nail.But it is also a divinely inspired institution, full of good purpose, which partakes of a unity far greater than the sum of its parts. That is why it is called the body of Christ.”

That is why it is called the body of Christ. I’m not altogether sure what she means.

Yes, we can get downright contentious. I can talk like this because of my advancing years and the older I get, the more contentious I get. Hadn’t you noticed? I love the old institutions, the historic forms of the Word and Prayer Book that I cut my teeth on. I still love some of the oldest hymns and resent it when we use a new or different tune to the one I remember my Mother teaching me. And yes I find distractions hard to swallow sometimes. I sit in the same pew each Sunday until someone takes “my place” and even that can prove to be irritating. A little one burbles away in the Prayer of Consecration and I lose my concentration. That new Bible – Message is it? – is that part of the Episcopal liturgy? So many changes.

And then I don’t get to church for a while as I get over some bug or other and I miss it so much. All of the pieces, contentious or not. I’m lost without them. And I am very comfortable with everyone – well most people anyway.

By the way, who is that new fellow? I wonder where he comes from and if he will stay?

The next week comes – that new fellow seems to have disappeared? Oh well –no accounting for taste, I always say. Hope he didn’t take offence at my asking him if he was raised an Episcopalian? Some people are so darnn sensitive, aren’t they? That little child seems to have disappeared as well. The place is like a revolving door sometimes.

Welcome Jesus.

Tim Moss

Connections II

Last month, I introduced the concept of developing directed energy for wellness. There are more discussions on spirituality and healing daily in the news. There does not seem to be a direct connection to religion and healing, just energy.

Most religions have a component of meditation/prayer, many times alone. Some focus on breathing, which is awareness of the breath coming in and out. Some focus on a mantra to keep your mind at rest. All acknowledge that while meditating our minds wander. That is OK. Just gently bring your focus back to nothingness.

Many people who use meditation do so for stress reduction. But some are looking for enlightenment. There is no question that by practicing stress reduction, healing is promoted. For healing to work one must take responsibility of one’s actions, become self-aware and understand the concept of balance. Our lives tend to weave from order to disorder, then chaos. Regaining balance restores order.

People, who play the stoic or stiff upper lip mode, are not being open to the energy that surrounds us.

Marsha Platt

The following poems were written by boys at DYS. They presented them as their gift to St. Stephen's at our Easter gathering, These are an indication of the faith that some of these boys have. [ed.]

We are all in treatment for the things we did.
 Just ask for forgiveness and God will forgive.
 But you have to have faith and not misgive;
 He can help us change the way we live.
 But it's not just in him, it is also you
 Try to change the negative things you do;
 And God will be there to guide you through.
 Test this theory and you will see it's true.
 God's got the ultimate overview
 So just try to pray like every night,
 And if you follow his plan, he will show you
 the light.
 No more darkness; everything is bright;
 Then everything should seem to be all right.
 The point of these rhymes is God you should
 believe in;
 I wouldn't have done this if it wasn't for St.
 Stephen's.

Written by *Joshua G.* DYS

The Joy of Easter

Easter is a great time to give praise
 Where we thank God for our beautiful days.

To realize we were created by sacrifice
 Where we all can be free for no price.
 Be glad and realize we're all blessed
 To keep our world clean and fresh.
 Gather with our families and have fun;
 Appreciating the sky and the bright sun.

Written by *Taequan C.* DYS

**IT
 IS STRANGE ISN'T
 IT....**

Isn't
 it strange
 how we need to know about an
 event for Church 2-3 weeks
 before the day so
 we can include it in our agenda,
 but we can
 adjust it for other events in the last
 minute?