

# A Voice in the Wilderness ...

The newsletter of  
The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist

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## June 2007

Warm weather has recently hit the high country, turning the mud to hardened dirt pack and Shaking off a late May snowfall, we enter into what we confidently expect to be a beautiful summer. We await the return of all our snowbirds and to a season rich in activities—including worship, service, education, and play.

The annual ecumenical baccalaureate service at Middle Park High School will be held Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, at 7PM.

Our annual spring/summer music night is on Saturday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6PM at the home of Karla and Fr. Spencer. [And *not* on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup>, as reported in last month's newsletter.] Maps are available at the church.

Fr. Spencer will be away on vacation the week of June 4<sup>th</sup>—10<sup>th</sup>.

Sunday June 10<sup>th</sup> will see our Volunteer Fair during coffee hour following the regular Sunday service. See "Notes and News" and "A Word from the Rector" for more details.

The annual Habitat Hobble will be on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, at 8:30AM.

And our first Compline on the Lake service will be held Sunday evening the 17<sup>th</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> at 5PM, with picnic meal to follow.

## *A Word from the Rector*

Some of you will have heard me tell this story before, but I want to repeat it here. When I first came to St. John's five and one half years ago (!), I promised that stewardship at St. John's would be more than simply a pledge drive to cover our budget needs. I emphasized that full stewardship was about money, time, and talent. We cannot be the church we aspire to be simply by having people write checks, as essential as that financial support is. We must be a people that give of our time and talent as well.

So, with this promise in mind, some five years ago your stewardship committee planned a "volunteer fair" or "ministry fair." The idea was that we would encourage more and broader participation in our membership across the range of St. John's' ministries. But in the preparation for this fair, I did a little exercise. I went over our membership list to review our current level of participation. And I was astonished to discover that with only a couple of exceptions (with extremely good reasons having to do with age and health), virtually every member of our church was involved in some way or another. And many people were doing two or even three different kinds of ministry. I was blown away by this—and our fair became less a matter of encouraging more participation than it was about information and giving people the opportunity to switch responsibilities around, if they so desired. And it also became an occasion to celebrate the health of a church with such dedicated and wide support of its members.

In light of this experience, we have not had a volunteer fair yearly, as I had originally planned. But it has been a couple of years since our last one, and our vestry has scheduled one for **Sunday, June 10**, immediately after service to be combined with coffee hour. We have several newer members who have not yet been incorporated into volunteering yet, and if you fall into this category, I very much hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to learn about the many different ways you can support St. John's with your time and your talent. Please join us that Sunday and visit the various tables with their various opportunities for volunteering. And if you have been faithfully working in one field for some time and are interested in new experiences, this is also your chance to explore other opportunities.

You may have noted that the fair is scheduled for the week that I will be on vacation. This is by choice—not mine, but your vestry's, to make the important statement, that your priest need not be present at every thing—not even every important thing—that St. John's does. It is one small blow against the heresy of clericalism, the notion, often unconscious, that church must revolve around the ordained clergy.

So I urge you to attend church on June 10 and to stay for the fair. Have a good time, learn something new, share your own knowledge, strike that blow against clericalism, and further the work that we do together, the work that means so much for carrying out the mission and for fulfilling the core values of St. John's. And do not forget to celebrate the continued health of St. John's.

I'll see you when Karla and I get back from visiting my mother in California.

Grace to you and peace, from God our father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

✠ Fr. Spencer

## *Notes about Ministries*

### **Looking for Marion**

You have read elsewhere in this newsletter about the Volunteer Fair and the opportunities to give back to St. John's in terms of time and talent. One specific need we have is for some generous book lover to volunteer to take over the library in our downstairs common area. We will be adding new bookshelves soon, but we need someone to monitor the borrowing, to keep the books orderly and in their proper places, and to integrate new books into the system. Please consider whether you might be well suited to this ministry.

### **More on time and talent**

Five out of seven of your vestry members were able to donate a Saturday of their time to increase their talents at a diocesan sponsored workshop for clergy and vestry members at St. Barnabas' in Glenwood Springs last May 12. Many thanks to Don Hicks, Jeanie Kemp, Eric Mowrey, and Brad Orr, who joined Fr. Spencer for the intensive and quite useful all-day sessions. (For the record, both of our other vestry members were signed up to go, but had to cancel due to last minute conflicts.)

### **Being worshipful**

The Worship Committee welcomes Phil Maes and Walter Wilson as new members, as we say goodbye to Brad Orr, who is taking on extra duties as head of both the evangelism and stewardship committees, and Stu Findley, who is off playing gypsy with Marilyn in Washington State. Phil and Walter join Loretta McLaughlin and Joan Von der Heiden on the committee. The Worship Committee discusses and plans with Fr. Spencer all worship services and serves as liaison between Fr. Spencer and the congregation. Please feel free to share reactions and opinions about our worship services with any member of the committee. Thanks to Phil and Walter for taking on this ministry and to Brad and Stu for their faithful service.

### **Our new storekeeper**

Thanks to Karla Allen for agreeing to take over responsibility for "the St. John's store." The store consists of all the items that artist Tim Hinz has produced for us, using primarily the St. John's cross in the design. We have hanging wall crosses, different sizes of crosses to be worn on a chain, pins, tie pins, etc. They are lovely, quite striking, and a wonderful way to show one's commitment both to Christ and to his people here at St. John's. They also make lovely gifts. A percentage of each sale goes to support St. John's. So look for Karla occasionally during coffee hour to look over "the store."

## *Updates from the Church Family*

### **“He who sings [to God in worship], prays twice”**

This is an old expression attributed to St. Augustine. The idea is that music moves our souls in ways beyond what words alone can. And, for most of us, music is fun. This is by way of inviting all of you who will be in town the first week of June to join us at Karla and Fr. Spencer’s home for music night, 5PM on Saturday, June 2. It is an evening of fun, food and drink, and music, both sacred and otherwise. We will also be learning some new music from the St. John’s songbook. Dinner is potluck, with drinks provided by your hosts. Come and party with us!

### **Do they really stand all the time?**

The diocesan Standing Committee acts as the bishop’s council of advice and, in the absence of a bishop, is the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese. It works intimately with the bishop’s office on all matters, especially financial and legal, of the diocese. St. John’s has been represented in this extremely important work by Ken Von der Heiden, and Ken has just been elected as the committee’s president. This continues a long tradition at St. John’s of service to the diocese. Congratulations on this honor, Ken, and (remembering the Chinese curse that one live in “interesting” times), may your tenure be extremely uninteresting. And thank you for your service both to St. John’s and to the Diocese of Colorado.

### **A high honor indeed!**

Each year CASE (Colorado Association of School Executives) gives an award (The CASEY award) to a non-educator who has made a significant contribution to education in Colorado. This contribution may be a big one-time service, or it may be service over a long period of time. Past recipients have included major politicians (Mayor John Hickenlooper, for example) or business people active in educational foundations or boards. This year, we are all so proud to say, the recipient of the CASEY is our own Betty Cranmer! Betty is cited for her 25 years of volunteering at Granby Elementary school, twenty five years of walking in all kinds of weather from her home to the school to work with and to enrich the educational experience of the youngest students. (She started when she was a young woman of 60!) Betty will receive this award in early August before approximately 800 school administrators at their convention in Breckenridge. Congratulations to you, dear Betty. And congratulations to Mayor Hickenlooper, who is indeed honored by having received the same award as you have!

### **Fore!**

St. John’s entered two teams in the annual Hospice golf tourney this year. One team consisted of four local hackers and the other of two local hackers and two ringers—oops! I mean guests—from St. Mary Magdelene Episcopal Church in Boulder. Moral: it is better to play with ringers than without. The guests led their team to a tie for 3<sup>rd</sup> place; the ringer-less team finished in an undisclosed, but somewhat lower, position.

## *Updates from the Church Family, con't.*

### **“Jean, Jean, you’re young and alive!”**

Jim Cartwright’s mother, Jean, is now well ensconced at Kremmling Hospital in their nursing care wing. If you are ever visiting Kremmling and can spare a few minutes, why not drop by to visit her? She would love to see any friend of Jim’s, and you would certainly brighten her day. Jean, incidentally, at age 91, is currently learning Spanish. You can drill her on vocabulary!

### **Putting out the welcome mat**

Please welcome the Rev. Bill Pounds, who will be filling the pulpit and presiding at Eucharist for Fr. Spencer on Sunday, June 10. Bill has been with us before and looks forward to renewing his friendship with many St. John’s parishioners.

### **Our favorite gypsies**

We were delighted to receive a letter from Stu and Marilyn Findley, who are now sojourning in Quilcene, Washington, and preparing for the onslaught of tourists, with whom they will be doing guided tours of the fish hatchery there. They love the area (“our own private park!”) and have lots of time to explore and enjoy their surroundings. They have not found an Episcopal church, but Fr. Spencer has generously given them dispensation to attend a nearby Presbyterian church. Thanks for the note, Stu and Marilyn, and please do keep us informed. We miss you.

## *Sermon of the Month*

*Sermon preached on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, May 20, 2007*

“That they may all be one.” That is the prayer that Jesus prayed for us on the very night he was taken prisoner and led off for trial, sentencing and execution. And he means us. Notice that he prays for all those who will believe through the words of his first disciples. And that includes us—we believe through their words. And Jesus prays that we may all be one.

What is this unity that Jesus prays we will know? What does it look like?

Does it mean that we are all in the same church? Does it mean that all Christians are to work so that we are all organized into one institution—like, say the medieval church was? I can’t believe that this is what Christian unity must look like. For one thing, this is simply about organization, institutional structures; it is not at all about anything spiritual. The medieval Roman Catholic Church may have been one entity on the organizational chart, but there was plenty of disunity within, as we know from Inquisition and the violence the Crusades visited upon infidel and Christian alike. Surely Jesus is not talking about organizational charts.

Does it mean that we all worship in the same way? Are we all to become liturgical churches like ours, the Romans, and the Lutherans? Do our Baptist friends need to learn to take the Eucharist weekly and to chant psalms with us? Or do we need to take on all the trappings of the Cathedral or perhaps take on the plainness of the Quakers?

I can’t believe that this is what Christian unity must look like. People are always going to worship God according to their own traditions, culture, and personal preferences—and surely God is glorified by honest and faithful worship, whatever it looks like. Surely Jesus is not talking about liturgy.

Does it mean that we all must believe the same things? Do we have to sit down with our friends from all other traditions and develop a confession of faith that we can all subscribe to? Dear God, deliver us from this prospect! And of course in the early church there were already different ways of understanding Jesus’ message and his work. These different ways have canonical status, for they can be found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the letters of Paul, the letter to the Hebrews, and James, etc. Surely Jesus is not talking about litmus tests of belief that even the first Christians could not have passed.

We have a diversity of organizational structures, and of ways of worshiping, and of ways of belief. And we always have. In the very early years of the church, even before any of the New Testament was written, a dispute arose among Christians. It involved whether, to become a Christian, one had to first become a Jew—to be circumcised and to be Torah-observant. All the first Christians were of course good Jews who believed that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah promised by Jahweh to Israel. So it was natural that many would believe that all converts would become Jews. The notion that one might follow Jesus without being Jewish was shocking, even unthinkable for many.

So a council was called, the Council of Jerusalem. And an amazing thing happened. People listened to each other. Actually listened. They heard stories of faithfulness, stories of spirit-filled ministry that God was blessing. And they saw that God was acting through these Gentiles who were following Jesus without becoming Jews. There are different accounts of what the details of the agreement reached were. But all accounts agree that there was a coming

together for common cause—a coming together of love and prayerful support for each other across the divide, the differences, between them. They acknowledged that one could be Christian in different ways—even importantly different ways. They acknowledged diversity and insisted upon unity.

I think that this models the unity that Jesus prayed for. Not the unity of uniformity, but the unity of common cause, love, prayerful support for all who proclaim Jesus as Lord.

This is why a couple of years ago, we instituted what I call our “local churches cycle of prayer,” in our prayers of the people. Each Sunday we pray, by name, for another church in Grand County, and we acknowledge them as our co-workers in Christ. We show common cause, love, and prayerful support—even when our differences with them may be huge. And I know that within our own community here at St. John’s, we maintain a wonderful unity of purpose, love and support, even when we have different ways of worshiping (some stand during the Eucharistic Prayer, while others kneel; some cross themselves at certain parts of the service, others do not; some use the holy water of the baptismal font for crossing themselves, other do not; and surely not everyone likes every part of the service as we now do it). Even when we have different ways of believing, as we do (we range from very conservative to the very liberal).

Jesus prayed this for us, that we all may be one. I think that what Jesus prayed for us so many years ago looks at least a little like what we have here. At least that is my hope; that is my prayer.

✠ Fr. Spencer