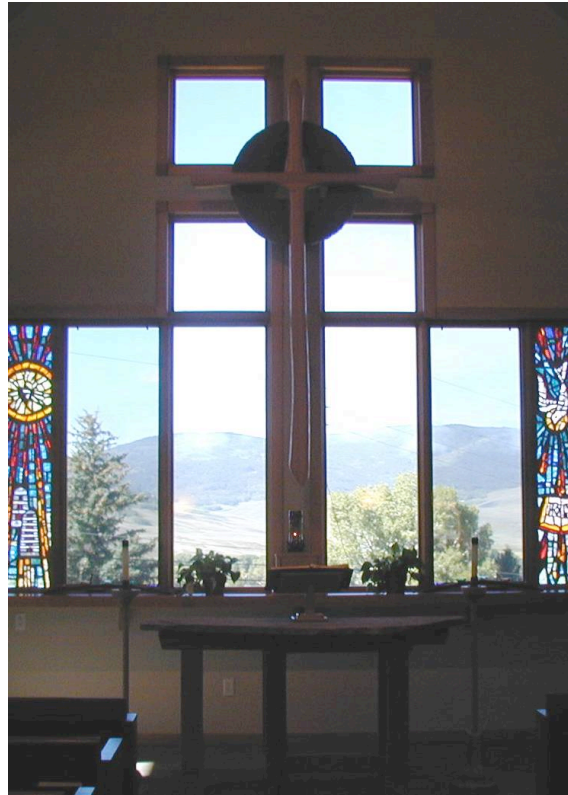


A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



Despite an unusually warm and dry autumn, the rumors are that we will likely see a winter this year and even, perhaps, a white Christmas. This month will see the following activities at St. John's as we prepare for the arrival of Christ.

Saturday the 1st, the "greening" of the church for the season of Advent at 9AM.

The Sundays of the 2nd, 9th, and 16th will see three adult education sessions on aspects of our worship service.

On Sunday the 23rd the children of St. John's will present a Christmas pageant after the service. Afterward we hold our annual "decoration" party as we prepare the church and parish hall for the Christmas season.

On Christmas Eve the 24th there will be services of Lessons and Carols at both Cranmer Chapel (5PM) and St. John's (8PM).

Christmas Day services will be held at 9AM.

A Word from the Rector

Into the deep with our bishop

We had a lovely visit from our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Robert O'Neill, on Sunday, November the 11th. Most parishioners did not realize that it took a special effort on the bishop's part to be with us. He had planned to drive up Saturday during the day to visit with our Trinity Church, Kremmling, neighbors and to spend the night before worshipping with us on Sunday morning. It turned out that because of a medical scare, he spent all of Friday night and much of Saturday supporting his wife Ginger at a hospital. By late Saturday the medical news was good, Ginger was fine, and so he drove up from Denver on Sunday morning to keep his visitation with us.

It was a great day. Those who knew the bishop were able to renew acquaintances, and many were able to meet him for the first time and to get a sense of his leadership of the diocese. St. John's presented a check for about \$14,500, a tithe of the Dunlap bequest that we received last summer. He allowed as how he could probably find a good place or two to put the money. Three years ago, when he visited St. John's for confirmation, we had a lot of fun when he placed his mitre on the head of confirmand Makenna Morck. Being reminded of this, when Makenna came forward at the end of service for a birthday blessing, the bishop once again placed it upon her. (Hmmm. Think there might be a message in this for your future calling, Makenna?) After a special brunch during Q. and A., there was an opportunity to discuss our common work here in the diocese. We were all happy to hear of all the good work going on around the diocese, and I imagine the bishop was pleased that St. John's was more interested in this broad-based work and progress than in the two or three parishes whose conflict gets so many headlines. So we had a lot of fun.

But of course mission is serious business, and the bishop challenged St. John's to move ahead boldly in mission. He echoed the call that he made at October's diocesan convention, a call—a challenge—to go out into deeper water. This was a reflection on Jesus' call to Peter that he take the boat out further from shore and let the nets down for a greater catch. "Not catching anything? Set out just a little further from shore into a little deeper water."

Are we at St. John's perhaps still working a little too close to shore? Once cannot spend all one's time in the deeper water, but sometimes we get a little too comfortable in the shallows. This is to get so comfortable with our routines, with what is comfortable and familiar, that we no longer risk stepping out to meet new challenges and, perhaps, to realize a greater reward.

Several people have told me that they were strongly affected by the bishop's words, and so was I. If you were not able to hear him or wish to revisit his sermon, see page 2 of the current *Colorado Episcopalian* for a different version of his sermon. May I suggest that this message, "Go out into the deep," might be a powerful theme for St. John's in 2008? Let's revisit this theme at our annual meeting to see what it might mean for our moving ahead more boldly in the new year.

Notes about Ministries

Poinsettia alert!

Would you like to remember or honor someone special this Christmas? An excellent way to do this—and to help make this Christmas season special at St. John's—is to send a donation to St. John's, marked for poinsettias for Christmas. Help beautify Christmas by memorializing someone beautiful! We thank you, and your Altar Guild thanks you.

Taking care of business: a pledge drive update

In a financially more difficult year than we have experienced recently, our pledging for the financial support of St. John's is edging up toward last year's figure. But we are still short and, if you are one of the ten persons/families who haven't pledged for the 2008 year, we need your help. If all persons who pledged last year but not (yet!) for next year should match last year's pledge, we would actually nicely surpass last year's results. This would be a terrific result, so please do your best to maintain at least your present support of St. John's. If you do not recall last year's pledge, call the church office for that figure.

If you are already on board as a pledger, then Thank You! We are grateful for each of the 34 persons/families who have pledged their support. Whether you are a long-standing member, a new or returned member, a year-rounder or part-timer—we need you, and we appreciate your support. We are especially grateful for the thirteen pledges increased over last year and for the six new pledges we have received to date. It is only through these increases that we can go beyond just keeping even and move toward growth in ministry. We'll keep you posted.

A footnote to the bishop's visit

There have been several requests for the text of the bishop's sermon delivered the Sunday morning of his visit here on November 11. We have not been able to acquire a text, but you may get a good idea of both the content and tone of Bishop Rob's message by reading his address to the recent diocesan convention, entitled "Go out into the Deep." It may be found on page 2 of the current *Colorado Episcopalian*, copies of which are available next to the mailboxes in the church.

A tree grows in St. John's

On Sunday, November 18, Ms. Debbe Knutson, executive director of Heart of the Mountain Hospice visited St. John's along with the Hospice Memory Tree, a Christmas tree with many ornaments, each of which commemorates the life of one departed. The event publicized the work of hospice in Grand County during official Hospice Month.

Sermon of the Month

Sermon preached on Sunday, November 25.

Here we are on the last Sunday of the church/liturgical year—the Last Sunday after Pentecost, i.e., the last Sunday before Advent 1—a new season, a new year. This Sunday is known as Christ the King Sunday, since all of the year points toward the time when Christ returns to establish his kingdom. It is the end—in the sense of goal—of both the church year and of all of history. And it offers us a good time to reflect on what it means to follow Jesus and to live in his kingdom.

I believe that I have shared with you before three ways in which we can and must read the meaning of scripture, an insight that I borrow from the Franciscan teacher, Richard Rohr. Scripture properly read tells us our individual stories. Rohr calls this “my story.” And scripture properly read tells us the story of our lives together, our lives in community. This is, in Rohr’s language, “our story.” And finally, scripture gives us the big story—what the world is about, what its end is, the meaning of life and the universe. And Rohr’s calls this “the story.” Scripture needs to be read at each of these three levels, and it is big enough and rich enough to bear this weight.

Keeping these three levels of meaning in mind, let us look at the reading from Colossians that we have just heard. Much of this reading is, scholars agree, a lengthy quotation from a Christian hymn, a hymn sung in the very first Christian churches. And I think it is easy to imagine this religious poetry as being set to music and sung at gatherings. The poetry is beautiful, but look for now just at what it tells us about the meaning of Jesus.

It tells us that that our individual lives are governed by our relationship to Jesus, that we, as individuals, gain strength, power, endurance, patience through him, and that through him we are rescued from the power of darkness. For each of us, this is “my

story,” and it makes sense, or gives meaning, to our individual lives.

It tells us that Christ is the head of the body, the church, and that this body, this community, is the source of our reconciliation and of our peace. The very meaning of our lives together is to be found in Jesus. This is “our story.”

And it tells us that in Jesus all things were created; that he was before all things, in all things, and, in one of my very favorite lines, in him all things hold together. That is to say, the meaning of all things—of the entire creation—is found in Jesus. “The story” is found in Jesus.

This hymn to Christ tells that we are to find in him individual meaning, the meaning of our lives together, and the meaning of the world itself. And, like scripture, Jesus is big enough and rich enough to bear this weight.

This sermon suddenly becomes very personal for me, because I must confess to you that my own Christian spirituality has been evolving in the past several weeks in significant ways. It has always seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity is a wonderful gift to us in that while we know that there is but one God, it turns out that there are three persons through which to know this God. There is Father/Creator spirituality for those who can best approach God in this way. And there is Son/Savior/Human Image theology for others. And there is Spirit/Comforter theology for yet others. And I have been heard to say that, although I have no reservations about the church’s theological teachings about Jesus (I am an orthodox Christian), my own spirituality has been more Father or Spirit oriented. But now I sense that that is beginning to change.

Most of you know that I spent a week in silent retreat and study about a month ago. I like to say that my retreats are maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ spiritual and $\frac{3}{4}$ study, but as I look back on this last retreat I find that I cannot really separate the spiritual and the study. I spent a lot of time studying a book on the Sermon on the Mount, for me always the most beautiful extended example of Jesus' teachings. And I have come to see this sermon not as a set of instructions, rules, or new laws to replace old ones. But rather as a description of the kind of hearts we are asked to form. If most or all of its teachings seem to be beyond our reach, it is because they are not intended as rules to follow, but as an invitation to take on the heart of Christ, to develop Christ-like values, attitudes, and dispositions. It is to be a disciple or an apprentice in the most basic sense of imitating and taking on the qualities of the master. And this process, sometimes called sanctification, is always ongoing and never completed in this life.

This process is about loving Christ, loving the man Jesus as he is revealed to us in scripture and in our hearts, and walking with him. Now this is not exactly news. I have been told this and have understood this for a long time. But somehow in the five days of silence and study and worship, I began to sense my own heart taking on a new and different kind of love for Jesus. If I loved the sermon and the values and ideals expressed in it, how could I not love, in a personal way, the person who both taught and exemplified these ideals. And I began to feel a love for Jesus that I had not felt before. I still have room for Father and for Spirit spirituality. But now, after 15 years or so of being a Christian, my sense of Jesus spirituality is becoming more real and deeper than I have previously known. You can teach an old dog new tricks!

I know that there are many of you who are way ahead of me on this. And you are probably thinking, "What took you so long?" There are those who sense Jesus in their hearts instinctively and more

easily than they do the persons of the Father or Spirit. Bravo for you. And if you do not, I am not saying that your faith is any the less for it. Worshiping God in any one of the persons, experiencing him in any one of the three persons, counts as fully worshipping and experiencing God and is, I believe, pleasing to God.

Sometimes a preacher preaches the sermon that he or she needs to hear. And this has been one of those. I have been preaching to myself; you guys have just been listening in. Thanks, then, for listening in.

Updates from the Church Family

Heavens to Betsy!

Many readers will remember Betsy Fowler, who had to leave Grand County a few years ago for lower altitudes. Betsy has been in touch recently with the news that she and Larry are doing well in Mankato, Minnesota, and are preparing for an around-the-world cruise. They play lots of bridge and have a good circle of friends and family. Betsy attends an Episcopal church, of course (!), but says she has not found the same kind of hospitality, support, and church unity that she knew at St. John's. She somehow thinks we are kind of special, and, Betsy, the feeling is entirely mutual. We miss you. Betsy followed up her kind message with a very generous check as an unrestricted gift to St. John's. Her card is posted on the bulletin board outside the kitchen. Thank you so much, Betsy, for your continued and long-distance faithfulness.

R.I.P.

Robert "Bob" Edwards, long time Grand County resident, and former member both of Trinity Church in Kremmling and St. John's died last month at his home in Alaska. Long time members will remember Bob and wife Kelley as proprietors of Edwards' Café on main street in Granby. Bob was the brother of George Edwards. Fr. Spencer presided at a graveside service in Kremmling on Saturday, November 10.

They say "70 is the new 40"

And you could believe it from looking at Don Hicks. Don celebrated his 70th birthday the other week, one year for every several trees he has personally taken from his property the last couple of summers. We should all work so hard, look so good, and live so long! Happy birthday, Don.

Katherine and Friend

Katherine Mowrey is back home recuperating after bowel surgery November 13 and a difficult recovery. But she improves day by day, and we expect to see her back in church soon. Please continue to keep Katherine in your prayers. And speaking of being back in church, it was a great to welcome back Pauline Friend after a long recover from her surgeries. Pauline will undergo a skin graft to close a persistent wound this Monday, December 10. This minor surgery should be the last of much too long a process. [Fr. Spencer cannot resist adding one of his favorite jokes: The definition of minor surgery? ---surgery on somebody else!]

"Mother" knows best

We are all so grateful for the work of the Rev. Nina Stasser, former member of St. John's, who filled in splendidly for Fr. Spencer for both Commemoration of all Faithful Departed (All Souls') on November 2 and the following Sunday service. Nina says she had a great time, and St. John's certain did. It was party and reunion time. We will do it again for sure, and next time the creator of the service bulletin will know that Nina does not care for the title "Mother" for women priests! Sorry, Nina.

December 2007

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
						1
						5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION * 11:30 VESTRY				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 CHRISTMAS PAGEANT * 11:00 DECORATE	5 PM LESSONS AND CAROLS AT CRANMER CHAPEL * 8 PM LESSONS AND CAROLS AT ST JOHN'S	9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST		2 PM BIBLE STUDY	8 AM WORSHIP COMMITTEE	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
30	31					
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST						