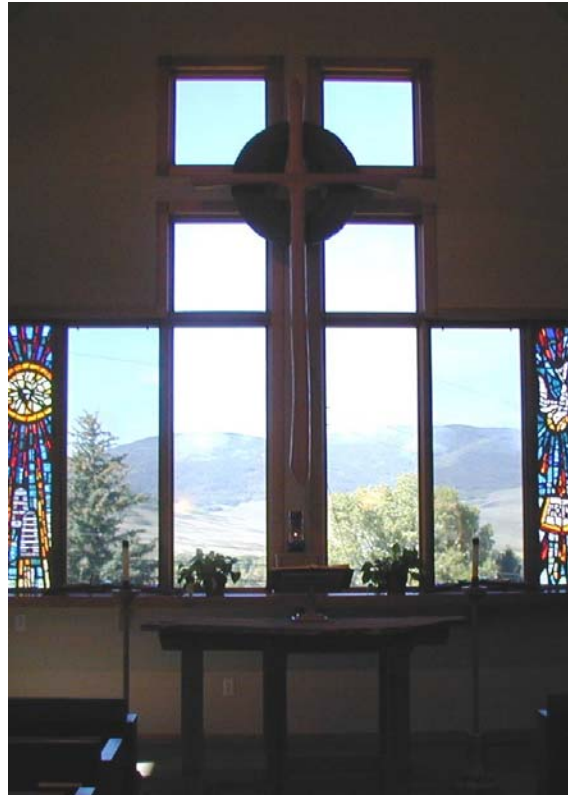


A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



SEPTEMBER 2008

Fall is in the air in the early mornings, and some of us even got a dusting of snow—in mid-August! Considering our long winter, some of us are becoming resigned to one of our shorter summers. Fortunately, we are a tough lot up here.

Fr. Spencer is on vacation from the 1st through the 9th.

On Saturday the 20th we are having a work/clean up day at St. John's, followed on Sunday the 14th with our observance of St. Francis Day with outdoor service and blessing of the animals.

And, for fun, join us at 7PM Saturday the 27th in the church parish hall for an old-fashioned sock hop. Bring your friends too. "Later Gator"!!

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A Word from the Rector

We are all aware of the difficult economic conditions the nation is experiencing this year. Pretty much all of know someone who is suffering, and most of us are at least feeling the pinch of higher gas prices as well as increases at the grocery store and elsewhere. Many of us have had to adjust some behavior. Karla and I figured that when we were both making the weekly trip between Boulder and Granby, it was costing us over \$250 a month in gasoline alone. This explains why we no longer see Karla here every Sunday and why I can be found more often at St. John's, or on the golf course, on Mondays and Tuesdays. I know that others have made similar adjustments.

We can't be sure of the reasons, but our collections at St. John's are running behind last year's. This may be due to economic conditions, or it may simply be normal fluctuations and that by the end of the year we will be on budget. We hope so, and we ask all members to make every effort to help us meet budget.

In the first four years of my tenure here at St. John's pledging was up overall by over 25%. And overall giving is up more than that. This is a remarkable achievement, given that until just recently our attendance had been flat and that several generous givers have moved away. But the last two years have not seen an increase. This is starting to put pressure on our budgets because, of course, our costs have continued to rise.

All of which brings us to this year and to our 2008 pledge drive scheduled for the last two weeks of September. Will we be able to exceed, or even meet, the \$115,000 pledged last year? Our total budget this year is \$125,000, adding interest income and other donations. We cannot fall short of this amount and maintain our ministries at their current levels. In fact, if we are to move ahead with the ministries identified at last month's parish retreat—green ministry, support for the area's students, and expanded prayer and off-site worship—we will need to grow the budget.

May I ask you all to begin prayerful consideration of your pledging to St. John's a little early this year? There are probably some whose financial condition will force a decrease in their pledging. If you are in this group, God bless you, we understand. (In fact, Karla's planned retirement will likely put us in this group.)

If your own financial situation has not worsened, please try to step up to help fill the gap of those who may have to give less. If you are not tithing yet, think of this year as a great opportunity to make a significant step toward a tithe!

If you are simply one of those who are feeling the pinch of inflation, then I ask you to consider the priorities in your life. If you love St. John's and are committed to God's mission as we discern and live into it here, perhaps there is some other part of your own budget that has a lower priority, something that can be given up in order to increase your contribution to God's work here.

Remember there are always two sides to good financial stewardship: the needs of our ministry to be funded effectively, which may need work this year, and our own need to grow more fully into being a generous and giving people—which always needs work.

This can be a year when we do more than simply hold our own. Let's make it a year of growth both in ministry and in our own formation. God bless you all for whatever you will be able to do. See you after vacation, rested and rarin' to go.

Fr. Spencer+

Notes about Ministries

Keeping the books

Kudos to Gene Ackley, Don Hicks, and Florice Lietzke for their good work in producing an audit of our church finances. This necessary work is not much fun and is all behind the scenes, but it is very much appreciated. Once again, it appears that no one will be going to jail.

Housekeeping

Great thanks to Jim Magill, who has taken on responsibility for looking after Cranmer Chapel. We have long needed a person for this task and Fr. Spencer, especially, is very grateful. Jim has met with a vestry committee and Kirk Lietzke to review repairs and possible upgrades at the chapel, so expect to see improvements at the chapel very soon. The chapel has already seen a fresh coat of paint and major cleaning as a result of a “work day” on August 30.

A mission accomplished

Cyndi Karnoscak recently returned from several weeks doing mission work in Europe. She worked as part of team supporting and training church planters, primarily in Brussels and Paris. This continues the work she and her late husband Mike did with their missionary organization, CrossLink International Ministries. CrossLink is now partnering with a larger missionary organization, called Christian Associates. Cyndi has a wonderful heart for mission, and one of these days we are likely to lose her to permanent mission work abroad.

Library update

A donor has just given our library a copy of a wonderful recent book on Paul. The Pulitzer Prize winning author Garry Wills has written an excellent book on understanding Paul, called *What Paul Meant*. It is highly recommended and available in the library downstairs.

Safe at home?

At a recent vestry meeting, money was approved to purchase a fire-proof safe for holding moneys and important documents. To date, we have received three different safes, all of which were, remarkably, damaged in transit! Because the damage has been at the seams of the safe, it appears that in each case the proof against fire has been compromised. It is hard to believe, but we are awaiting the fourth try now and hoping for better luck. Actually we are hoping for better packing; the safes are clearly too heavy for cardboard and Styrofoam packing.

Sermon of the Month

Sermon for Sunday, August 24

“But who do you say that I am?” Could there possibly be a more fundamental question for any of us? Jesus asks Peter “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter, usually the slow learner who gets things wrong, gets this one right. “You are the messiah, the Son of the living God!”

It reminds me of the end of all the Lone Ranger episodes. The Lone Ranger rides into town, performs all these great deeds, saves the town or the fair damsel or whoever, and as he rides out of town, someone asks “Who was that masked man?” The mask symbolizes the ambiguity of his identity—it is his deeds that give him away. “Why, don’t you know? That’s the Lone Ranger!”

Jesus “rides into town.” He does great deeds. His identity is also ambiguous. Who *is* this guy? There has been no one like him in the experience of all who know him. Who do we say that he is? “Why, don’t you know? That’s the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Who do we say that Jesus is? Do we stand with Peter on this one? Can we stand with him, saying “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God?” Do we truly believe this? And, if so, how do we say it?

Have you ever thought much about the truly intimate relationship between belief and action? (Sorry, it’s the philosopher in me, struggling to get out again.) Think about it. We do not see anyone’s beliefs directly. How do we know what someone believes? In general, in only two ways. By what they say they believe and by how they act.

But by how they act may be the most fundamental way. In fact, we attribute beliefs to beings who cannot say what they believe at all. Consider our pets. When Jake comes to me at 5:30 in the evening, vigorously wagging his tail and looking at me with eager eyes, I deduce that he believes it is dinner time. When he licks my pants, I decide he believes that there are dog biscuits in my pocket. As with dogs, so with higher animals at the zoo; we observe their behavior and attribute beliefs to them all the time. And with humans, we sometimes decide what others believe more by what they do than by what they say. If a man says he believes there is buried treasure over there, but we observe him digging over here, we probably will deduce that his true belief is that it is over here. It’s not for nothing that we say “Actions speak louder than words.”

This is what Paul is getting at in the passage from Romans. If you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, then you will act in certain ways. You will not just say so; you will present your bodies as a living sacrifice. How do we do that? By not being conformed to the world, but by being transformed. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed.” This is the appropriate response by Christians to Jesus’ message, and it is how we are to show that we believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And not just by saying it.

I once tried to make a list of all of ways of the world that we as Christians are not to be conformed to. The list could be quite long, but here are just a few ways.

The world (Paul would say the way of the flesh) tells us that we are to put ourselves first, that we strive to get ahead through self-promotion, one-upmanship, a sense of entitlement, and even, when necessary, through deception and violence. Paul says do not be conformed to this world. The Gospel says that we love others as ourselves, that we don't put ourselves first.

The world tells us that when people offend or harm us, the appropriate thing to do is to retaliate. "Don't get mad, get even." The Gospel tells us to love our enemies.

The world tells us that we are successful through the accumulation of goods and services. It trumpets consumerism, self-gratification, keeping up with the Jones's, and "he who dies with the most toys wins." Paul says do not be conformed to the world. The Gospel says that we are to live simply.

The world tells us that there is much to be afraid of out there. It encourages us to be fearful and defensive, protective of our selves and our belongings. Paul says do not be conformed to this world. The Gospel says, live fearlessly.

We show that we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, by not being conformed to the world but by living in such a way that we show we are transformed. You may remember that some time ago I mentioned that there is a long-standing cable news commentator that I have heard in political discussion for years. He is not by any means a mean person, nor is he a bomb-thrower, or in any way a bad person that I can see. But I was shocked a year or so ago to read that he was an Episcopalian. I was shocked because having heard him in conversation over the years, I had simply never heard him say anything that would have suggested a spiritual commitment. Wouldn't you think that in hours and hours of conversation about political and social questions he would have said *something* that would have indicated a commitment to not conforming to the world?

Or maybe not. Maybe this is harder than I think. Would people who only see or hear me away from church pick up a clue that I believed Jesus was the Messiah, the son of the living God? Some words or actions that would indicate a love for others, a desire for simplicity, a fearlessness, or a gift for forgiveness? Would someone pick up such a clue from you? Let each of us ask of himself/herself this question.

Here's another question for us: If you were hauled into court and charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

So it is in attempting to not be conformed to the world but transformed through loving others, forgiving freely, and living simply and fearlessly, that we most fundamentally answer Jesus' question: But who do you say that I am? When we say "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," we say it not only with our lips but also in our lives. "But who do you say that I am?"

Updates from the Church Family

Keeping tabs

Jerry Woods was hospitalized for a few days last month in Durango to battle an attack of pneumonia. He's now back home and doing fine. Jerry can be reached at 970-409-8085. Karen Hronek continues to care faithfully in difficult circumstances for Peter in his weakness. She is able to get out more these days, and is now a licensed Pilates instructor.

A happy return

We are delighted to learn that Bob and Nancy Borberg (and Maureen) are back in Grand County. They will be opening a small new restaurant in Winter Park, which is great news. We look forward to hearing more about this.

The family that prays together . . .

There will be two informational/organizational meetings for those interested in possibly joining a centering prayer group, one at 9AM Monday, September 8, and the other at 3PM on Friday the 12th. Sharry Erzinger (726-7990) is organizing the group. Be in touch with her, Deacon Diane, or Fr. Spencer if you are interested or have questions.

The college spirit

A couple of weeks ago we said a "goodbye" and gave our blessing to Nichole Fuqua on her last Sunday with us for a while. Joe and Monica are back from helping her to move into her dorm at the University of Nebraska, Kearney, where she begins her college days as a brand new freshman. We know you will do us proud, Nichole.

I know that guy!

We had a special treat this month when Phil Maes joined us for worship. He reports that he, Jeannine, and Alexandra are doing well in their new home in Salida. They are still greatly missed here.

Setting up shop

Eric and Katherine Mowrey have purchased a ski rental business in Winter Park, in the Park Plaza shopping center near Cranmer Chapel. Congratulations and good luck to them. And the rest of us need to steer all our visiting friends to them.

September 2008

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	FR. SPENCER ON VACATION					8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * EVENING PRAYER AT CRANMER CHAPEL
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST		FR. SPENCER BACK		2 PM BIBLE STUDY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST WITH BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS * 10:45 AM VESTRY MEETING			FR. SPENCER OUT OF OFFICE	2 PM BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	NOON ST. JOHNS WOMEN'S GROUP	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * GRANBY CHURCH CLEANUP DAY 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST				2 PM BIBLE STUDY	8AM WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL * 7PM SOCK HOP IN PARISH HALL
28	29	30				
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST						