

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



APRIL 2010

Somehow it doesn't seem fair for newsletter preparation week to coincide with Holy Week. And we know which of these two responsibilities takes priority. So forgive any shortcomings in this edition of Voice in the Wilderness and if you are in residence, be sure to join us in our journey through Holy Week to a triumphant Easter. See the sermon of the month for more encouragement to come journey with us!

We observe Maundy Thursday at 6PM on the 1st with Holy Eucharist, footwashing, and stripping of the altar.

On Good Friday, the 2nd, we observe Stations of the Cross at noon and Good Friday service with veneration of the cross at 6PM.

So we will be more than ready to break out in celebration with Easter Vigil on Saturday the 3rd, at 5PM at Cranmer Chapel and 8PM at St. John's.

Easter Day the 4th we celebrate Holy Eucharist at our usual 9Am time, the service to be followed by Easter egg hunt, games, and brunch. We will have an incorporation ceremony to mark and to celebrate new members joining St. John's.

Fr. Spencer will be out of the office on vacation the week of the 26th—May 2. The Rev. Susan Greenwood will supply in Spencer's absence.

P.O. Box 954 Granby • CO 80446 • (970) 887-2742

Rector: The Rev'd. Spencer Carr • spencercarr@rkymtnhi.com • (970) 887-2193

A Word from the Rector

You have heard the no doubt over-used expression, “When life gives you a lemon, make lemonade.” Over-used, to be sure, and no doubt it will seem to some a bit Pollyanna-ish. If only it were that easy to turn something really sour or painful into something sweet and pleasant.

But this sentiment is particularly appropriate, it seems to me, to people of faith. I was reminded of this last week in talking to a close friend who is facing some serious medical issues. After talking about it for a while, she said that while she was worried about it, she had come to look upon it as an opportunity to grow closer to the Lord. It reminded her, constantly, that she was not in control and that all she could do was to put herself, in faith, in the hands of God. She found comfort in that, and she experienced it as spiritual growth. Lemons into lemonade.

So what so many of us might see as a wholly negative thing, she was able to turn into a great good. This is also theologically sound and based in scripture. For she might have cited Romans 8:28, in which Paul writes that “we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” This is not, of course, to say that all things *are* good, but that God can bring the good out of even clearly bad things.

In a few weeks I will be taking a week off to go to California to be with my mother. Mom is now 88 and seems to be sinking more into dementia day by day. My brother and I are struggling with how to persuade an incompetent, but still very stubbornly independent, woman, to accept the care that she needs. I do not look forward to this visit at all. But I am inspired by my friend’s example to look for ways in which God might bring good out of this experience, both for Mom and for me. For Mom, she will have the pleasure of one of her sons with her, and perhaps I can find ways to help her stay where she is and still receive the help she needs. She will certainly be reminded that she is not alone in her struggles. For myself, it will perhaps be an opportunity to find a deeper level of humility and service. Or perhaps to be reminded of and to be grateful for all that Mom has done for me over the years and all the times that I was a burden to her. It is not for me to predict how God will work in either of us during this time; but it *is* for me to be open and alert to seeing his hand at work. I am sure that he will be busy squeezing lemons and adding sugar all week!

If there is a particular trial or difficulty that you are facing right now, by all means, do all that you can do to resolve the situation practically. But do not neglect how your working through the experience may allow God to change you or those around you in deep and spiritually profound ways.

Lemons to lemonade. “All things work together for Good.”

Fr. Spencer

Notes about Ministries

Time for everybody to “get the Word”

The Thursday afternoon Bible Study group has changed its meeting time effective after Easter. Beginning April 8 we will meet at 6:30PM Thursdays for Evening Prayer, refreshments, and Bible study. We want to meet at a time when all might be able to attend and not just those who do not have to work 9-5. The new format will allow for a mix of prayer, fellowship, and Bible reading. And YOU are invited as we continue our reading in the book of Matthew.

Cranmer Chapel invaded!

Saturday, March 27, saw the annual “invasion and occupation” of Cranmer Chapel by the youth group of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Centennial. They arrived for the Saturday evening Eucharist, settled in for the evening, and spent Sunday skiing. They have always been good guests, and we are delighted to be able to help them enjoy a day on the slopes in God’s country. This year they also took some time to make palm crosses out of the palm fronds for use in our Sunday service.

Doing our part

We have received a lovely letter from Bp. O’Neill thanking St. John’s for our part in the overwhelming response to the “Epiphany Appeal for Haiti.” St. John’s donated \$6,780 to Haiti relief, and the total diocesan gift totals over \$500,000. The money has been distributed to Episcopal Relief and Development and to the Colorado Haiti Project, both outstanding organizations that, with people already on the ground and well connected to Haiti, will be able to use the funds most effectively. Thanks to all of you who gave so generously.

Sermon of the Month

Come and journey with us!
Regular parishioners will find these words very familiar. It is the invitation that we add on to our church's mission statement. And it is adapted from the song that we often sing here at the beginning of our Sunday service, "Come and journey with me!"

What we do when we say these words is to conceive of our Christian lives as a journey—a faith journey—and to invite others to share the journey with us. This morning, I invite each of you to come journey together in a more particular way. Not just the faith journey of your own life, but a journey that encapsulates, that recapitulates, that makes real anew to each of us, Jesus' own story—his journey through Holy Week.

For the arc of Holy Week reflects the drama of Jesus' last week. And make no mistake, it is a drama. It begins today, Palm Sunday, with the promise of his acclamation as he rides into Jerusalem. Then on Maundy Thursday amidst the growing danger he and his disciples are facing, he exhorts them to serve one another as he dramatizes this in kneeling to wash their feet. It is also the evening of the Last Supper, with its intimations of danger hovering very near. And then the wheels fall off. Disaster strikes on Friday. Death strikes on Friday. And all seems utter failure. The disciples are routed, defeated men. And then, after a time of grief and despair, ultimate triumph. God's resources are there to conquer sin, failure, and death. This is the arc, the drama, of the final week of Jesus' life.

And it is also the arc, the drama, of his entire ministry. The promise and the joy of his birth; the service and the teaching of his ministry; the rejection and apparent failure, and the glorious triumph, the comeback, if you will, in the resurrection. It's all there: the early promise and optimism; the struggle of service; rejection; and vindication.

I said earlier that I was issuing an invitation to come journey through Holy Week and that this was different from the invitation to journey with us on the Christian journey. But really, it is not so different. For what I am calling the arc and the drama of Jesus' last week, of Jesus' ministry, is also very much the arc and the drama of our own Christian lives, stripped of the particulars that make each life unique. Our Palm Sunday is our conversion, our first real commitment to Jesus. It is a time of promise and optimism, when all things are new, all things seem possible. And so we respond in faithful service, as best we can, the Maundy Thursday period of our journey. And we all, to some extent, perform our Christian service in a dangerous environment. Not usually dangerous to our physical wellbeing, but certainly to our spiritual health. There are dangers all around. And Good Friday? This is the failure that we have all known at times in our Christian lives, those times when we have just flat fallen on our faces. Some of us have known extremely dark times, and we have not been certain of a way forward at all. All was black; all was hopeless.

Until we emerge into the light again and know the ultimate triumph of God's acceptance and forgiveness. This is the arc and drama of the life of faith: promise; service and commitment, danger, failure, and ultimate triumph. This is the journey you are invited to share when you become a Christian—in this community of Christ this week.

Of course it is possible to take short cuts on this journey. One can—and so many do—jump from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. (That is why we get the passion reading this Sunday, which is actually very much out of order. It makes no liturgical sense to read this story of Jesus' crucifixion on this day, when we will be doing so, much more appropriately, on Good Friday. But so many people miss the reading of this story

on Good Friday that it is included today so that it will not be missed altogether.) But to take this shortcut from Palm Sunday to Easter is to miss out on the power of living through these events in the proper order, with the proper emphases, throughout the week. It is like jumping straight to dessert without the nourishing meal that is meant to precede it. It is to move to cheap grace, without acknowledging and making real to oneself the commitment, the danger, the failures that lie between the promise and the ultimate success. It is to deny the reality of the darkness of our human journey. And to miss the darkness of Good Friday is to rob Easter of its context and of so much of its spiritual impact.

To know all of Holy Week in the beauty of its liturgy is both to make real Christ's story and to make it ours as well. When we do this we are changed; we become more like Christ. And the entire week becomes a sacrament—the outer and visible sign of inward grace, as God works change within us.

You are off to a good start. You are here for the promise. Come to Maundy Thursday. Come to Good Friday—either or both the Stations of the Cross or the evening Good Friday service. Come for the huge celebration of Easter Vigil on Saturday. And of course come next Easter Sunday. Come to them all. Know the entire drama of the Christian story. Know it. Live it. Make it real.

Come and journey with us!

Easter Dream by Oscar Lukefahr, C.M. in the Ligourian March 1989

Sunlight streamed through her window. Annie wheeled her chair into its warmth. Bright yellow daffodils reminded her of an Easter dream she'd had sixty years before.

* * *

She had only two weeks to wait until the birth of their first child. She was sitting at a window admiring the flowers when she fell asleep. In her dream she spoke with the child in her womb.

“Hello, Johnny.”

“Who are you?”

“I’m your mother.”

“Mother? What’s a mother?”

“I’m the one, along with your father, who brought you into this world.”

“Where are you? Why can’t I see you?”

“You can’t see me because you are living inside me. Soon you’ll be born, then we’ll see each other.”

“Born? What does that mean?”

“You’ve been growing, and there’s not enough room for you there. The life support system that’s been keeping you alive won’t work much longer.”

“You mean I’m going to die?”

“No, you won’t die. You’ll just begin to live in a new way.”

“Why should I believe that? Maybe you’re not even there. Maybe I’m all alone and just imagining this.”

“Johnny, you don’t think you came from nothing, do you? Where you’re living is real, but the world is much bigger. When you’re born you’ll grow tall and strong. You’ll run and play and make friends. You’ll hike in the woods and have a puppy. You’ll...”

“Wait a minute. What are friends? What are woods? What’s a puppy?”

“I can’t explain because there’s nothing like these things where you are. You’ll just have to wait and see.”

“Now I know I’m imagining this. I’m going to die and I’m afraid.”

“Don’t be afraid, Johnny. Do you know where your feet are?”

“Yes, they’re at the end of my legs.”

“That’s right. Now what can you use them for where you are?”

“Nothing.”

“Right, Johnny, but you have them because there is an earth here for you to walk on and run on. Your feet wouldn’t make sense if there were not a world out here. Can you believe that?”

“I’d like to, but I’m afraid.”

“I know, and what you fear, your birth, will have to come. There will be some pain and darkness, but then there will be light and life – more life than you can imagine. I have

been through what you will be going through. I'll be waiting here for you with open arms and a big smile. What you think of as death you will find is really birth."

* * *

That dream seemed so real, Annie thought. Johnny has grown into a man she'd always be proud of. He'll be coming at Easter to visit her at the nursing home.

"Annie!" A voice startled her out of her thoughts. She turned but saw no one—just the crucifix on the wall above her dresser.

"Annie!" She heard the voice again, but this time it seemed to come from within. She understood. She closed her eyes and whispered in prayer, "Yes, Lord?"

"Annie, it's almost time for you to come home."

"You mean I'm going to die?"

"No, Annie. You'll soon be born. You'll begin to live in a new way."

"Lord, I'm afraid. Sometimes I wonder if you are really there. I wish I could see you face to face."

"That's not possible now, Annie, because I'm on the other side of death. But you don't think you came from nowhere, do you?"

"No, but sometimes heaven seems like a fairy tale."

"Well, I can't describe heaven any more than you could explain your world to Johnny before he was born."

"I suppose so, Lord, but I'm still afraid."

"Annie, think of your heart. Has it ever really been satisfied? Have you ever been completely happy? Your heart was made for God and eternity. Like Johnny's feet were made for walking on earth, your heart was made for heaven."

"I'm still afraid, Lord."

"I know, Annie, and what you fear will have to come. There will be some pain and darkness, but then there will be light and life – more than you can imagine. I have been through what you will be going through. I'll be waiting here for you with open arms and a big smile. And what you think of as death you will find as really birth!"

"Amen, Lord," Annie whispered – and she knew her dream was real.

--Submitted by Kaye Piper for the Friday afternoon contemplative prayer group

Updates from the Church Family

Incorporations, ink?

On Easter Sunday we will continue a practice first introduced last year by featuring a ritual of incorporation during the service. This will be a brief time of prayer and exchange of promises between our congregation and newcomers wishing to make public their commitment to living out their Christian lives in the context of this community. We continue to celebrate the continuing growth of St. John's.

R.I.P.

It is with sadness and regret that we announce the death of Fr. Frank Gerber, former priest to the Roman Catholic churches in East Grand County. Frank had been retired and living on the Front Range for the past couple of years. He was a well-liked and faithful priest, always cheerful and generous.

Greetings and congratulations!

We welcome to Grand County the Rev. Bill Nabers, newly installed pastor at Lord of the Valley Lutheran Church in Granby. Bill was a guest at St. John's on a recent Sunday, the Sunday before taking up his ministry at Lord of the Valley. We congratulate our Lutheran friends on their new ministry with Bill. (It is hard for some of us to believe that Fr. Spencer is now the dean, in terms of length of service, among the mainline denominations in East Grand County.)

Making a joyful noise

Our March music night was held in the lovely home of Lisa Von der Haar and Tom Papathakis and was graced by the musical accompaniment not just of Kay, Tom, and Lisa, but also of Bill Morck and John Simmons. Highlights included a rousing rendition of "Proud Mary" by Kay and a duet by John and Michele Simmons of a classic Roy Rogers cowboy song. A great time was had by all. Special thanks to our hosts Tom and Lisa.

April 2010

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
				1	2	3
				6 PM MAUNDY THURSDAY		8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM EASTER VIGIL AT CRANMER CHAPEL * 8 PM EASTER VIGIL AT ST. JOHNS
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 EASTER EGG HUNT, GAMES & BRUNCH				6:30 PM BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 VESTRY MEETING				6:30 PM BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST/ SUNDAY SCHOOL				6:30 PM BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
25	26	27	28	29	30	
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST					2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	