

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



JUNE 2010

We know that on Pentecost we are to expect “a sound like the rush of a violent wind,” but what we were *not* prepared for was the day following Pentecost, when Grand County was whipped by winds up to 50 to 60 mph. Whether or not this is the work of the Spirit, we have had an unusually windy spring. May the Holy Spirit be working in us just as vigorously, even as we look for a milder June, a June with the following activities to look forward to.

On Friday the 4th at 7PM at the high school, Fr. Spencer will preach at a Baccalaureate service for graduating seniors (and especially for our own Makenna Morck and Tyler Orr). The next day on the 5th following graduation services, we will celebrate with the graduates and their families at St. John’s beginning around noon. All are invited.

On the 19th Habitat for Humanity holds its annual Habitat Hobble fundraiser. The “race” starts opposite the Fraser Safeway at 8AM and ends at Cooper Creek Square.

And we celebrate the feast day of our patron saint with an outdoor Sunday morning service on the 20th at 9:30 in Polhamus Park, behind the Town Hall. Come for worship and picnic to follow.

Our first Prayer-on-the-Lake service will be Sunday evening the 27th when we gather at the Grand Lake Marina.

Finally, here is an early reminder to save the evening of **July 3rd** for our third annual Celebration of God and Country service at St. John’s. Time to be announced.

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A Word from the Rector

At last month's annual Clergy Conference Bishop O'Neill reported on the state of the diocese, mentioning several important positive developments, as well as some of the challenges facing us. Among the good news was the continuing success of a couple of recent church starts. Another was the acquisition of an as yet unnamed Conference and Camping facility near Woodland Park. Perhaps one of the most positive aspects was the growing sense of community and support among the clergy of the diocese.

Among the challenges facing us is the continuing financial strain on the diocese. No other diocese of comparable size has so small a staff trying to hold things together as Colorado's. The strain on the diocesan staff is showing, and everyone agrees that the current situation is unsustainable. The bishop asked us all to try to think imaginatively of ways to address this problem.

As a result of my own thinking about this, whether it counts as imaginative or not, I asked vestry at our May meeting if they would agree to increase our giving to the diocese in the following way. Currently we do what the diocese asks all parishes and missions to do: we tithe to the diocese on our plate and pledge income. That is to say, all donations to St. John's that are put in the collection plate or that come to us through pledges from our annual financial stewardship drive, are tithed to the diocese. (We also give 5% to the Northwest Mission Region, which supports mission and parish work in our region.) But we also receive, fairly consistently, extra income of perhaps \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year. This extra income comes primarily from special gifts, bequests, and investment income. At my request, vestry voted unanimously to begin pledging 10% to the diocese on all our income, whether plate or pledge or from some other sources. (Note that this does not apply to money given to St. John's for specific outreach purposes; money given to St. John's for Haiti, for example, goes entirely to Haiti.)

This amount of money will not turn around the financial picture at the diocese, but it does send a strong statement that St. John's is one

church that will go beyond what is expected to demonstrate and to live into its support for the larger church.

There may be some who would question this decision, some who might not fully appreciate the difference between an Episcopal Church, rooted in the life of the diocese, and a more Congregational church, based more in its own concerns. There is not room here to fully spell out and defend the wider church commitments of our Episcopal heritage, but I will at least gesture in this direction.

For we are not rugged, go-it-alone, individualist Christians. We belong to a diocese, to a national church, to an international communion, and to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Each of these levels brings both commitments and opportunities. Each deepens our understanding of church. To look just at our core values, our ability to Care for Others is dramatically increased by our connection to and support of, to name just two examples, the Colorado Haiti Project and Episcopal Relief and Development. We are better able to Worship with Quality by virtue of standing in the tradition of the apostles, by having inherited so much of our service from this tradition. And we are stronger in our Inquiry into Truth and Meaning for being in our Anglican tradition, with all its resources and values. We can Celebrate all of Life more deeply when we do so in the context of the holidays and shared values or the wider church. And, finally, we can Share the Joy of this Life with Others through the missionary work of the national church as well as the church expansion done at the diocesan level.

And, theologically, when we participate and rejoice in the wider church, we live into Christ's prayer that all who follow him might be one with him and the father. We are connected as branches to the one Vine. We participate as members of the one Body.

All of this means that our Christian life and witness at St. John's is deeper, richer, and broader than it could possibly be, were we to see ourselves as Congregational. And whatever enriches our Christian life is well worth our continued support.

Grace and Peace to you all. Fr. Spencer+

Notes about Ministries

Happy Hosts

While Cranmer Chapel has occasionally put up youth groups on ski trips, last month Fr. Spencer sent an explicit invitation to all diocesan youth programs to invite them to be in touch us if they are interested in using the chapel for youth recreation or ministry trips. This may result in the chapel being used more often, and in strengthening ties between St. John's and other parishes around the diocese. This coming month, a ministry team from an Episcopal Church in Minnesota will stay over at the chapel one night, and a Habitat for Humanity mission trip team will be staying for a few nights downstairs at St. John's. We want our buildings to be used—for ministry.

And while we are at it . . .

It may be useful to remind folks that more goes on at St. John's and Cranmer Chapel than may meet your eyes. For if you are not here during the week, you would not know that among the groups that regularly use our facilities for their work are two musical groups—the Grand Chorale and Cello-bration—and occasionally other groups needing rehearsal space. Also, the boards of three non-profits—the Mountain Family Center, Habitat for Humanity, and Heart of the Mountains Hospice. Three support groups are also regular users of our spaces—Alcoholics Anonymous, a Parkinson's Support Group, and a domestic abuse counseling program under the auspices of Colorado West Mental Health Center. The East Grand High School Extension Service for learning disabled students has also used our facilities on a regular basis until this year. Making our facilities available for these good works is just one more way in which we reflect Christ back to the community.

Your vestry at work

On Saturday, May 15, Loretta McLaughlin, Tom Papathakis, and Fr. Spencer traveled to St. Matthias Church in Monument for an all-day workshop on church development. They studied the dynamics of different sized churches, as well as changes in the culture and their

implications for what churches should be doing these days. This was a diocesan project designed to help churches and their vestries to think about how to develop strong, healthy, and growing churches.

Our business was picking up

Under the auspices of our Green Team, a crew of a dozen or so volunteers spent part of Saturday morning, June 22, picking up trash from our mile of highway on Colorado 34. It took braving high winds, but we can be proud of the cleanest mile of highway in Colorado! At least for a while.

And speaking of high winds . . .

The annual golf tournament to benefit our local hospice was blown out—as opposed to rained out. Winds up to sixty miles an hour chased all the golfers into the clubhouse after just three holes. This may have been punishment for Fr. Spencer’s unseemly trash talking about our beating teams from all the other churches! Next year, he promises to be more pastoral.

The Lord is ascended indeed!

For the first time in recent memory, St. John’s celebrated Ascension Day, May 13, joining with our Lutheran brothers and sisters at Lord of the Valley Lutheran Church. At the invitation of Pastor Bill Nabers, Fr. Spencer preached, and while we didn’t quite match our hosts in attendance, it was close! We shall see if this turns out to be an annual ecumenical service. For several years now, the Lutherans and Presbyterians have participated in Maundy Thursday services at St. John’s.

Sermon of the Month

Sermon preached on Ascension Day at Lord of the Valley Lutheran Church.

My thanks to Bill and to all our Lutheran friends for the hospitality they offer us Episcopalians this evening. It is a wonderful thing when Christians show they can actually get along with each other, love one another, work and worship together, despite differences of style and belief, though in this case, I have to admit that the differences are pretty small.

And I also give thanks that this occasion forces me, finally, to think seriously about the doctrine of the Ascension for the very first time. For we had never observed Ascension Day in my time at St. John's, nor do I think that it had been done before. How about you guys? Since it is apparently an important part of Bill's understanding of the Christian calendar, he has clearly thought more deeply about it than I had.

There is a reason why Ascension Day has been called the most embarrassing of Christian holy days. The image we have is of Jesus being lifted up to heaven, straight up into the air. Now the problem is not—at least it shouldn't be—that the miracle of being lifted up into the heavens is so hard. Miracles are no stumbling block. I have always thought it rather strange that so many Christians accept the miracle of the resurrection and then, confident in that, spend so much time trying to explain away other New Testament miracles. I mean, if God can raise Jesus from the dead, why do we blink at healings or, in this case, at Jesus' body being physically lifted up into the heavens.

No, the problem is that the story seems to commit us to the idea that heaven is a few thousand feet above us, when we now know that if you go straight up above us, you simply keep traveling into the vastness of outer space. Or as one scholar put it, most Christians think that the resurrection and ascension act as a two stage rocket. The resurrection gets Jesus up out of the ground, and the ascension rockets him into outer space.

But this is not how the early church saw it at all. Oh, they might well have been working with a model of heaven in which it is up just beyond the skies they could see. But this bit of mistaken geography isn't—and wasn't—what the Ascension was about. The early church saw the paschal mystery as a unity of suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. Each stage was necessary. You could not stop with Jesus' suffering; he had to die. And you couldn't stop with his death, for he had to conquer death. And you couldn't stop with his resurrection, either. For without the ascension we are left with Jesus walking the earth, still a creature of time and space. It is the ascension which signals the completion of God's saving work—the return of Jesus to the Father in glory.

Where we go wrong in understanding the ascension is in thinking of it as something within space, literally as a geographical doctrine, as a change in Jesus' bodily position from one place to another. But to treat the ascension this way and to downplay it out of embarrassment would be just like rejecting Genesis on the grounds that it is geologically or evolutionarily embarrassing. Most of us have no difficulty accepting the great theological statements of Genesis, while rejecting it as a geology or biology text. Or even as a history text. Genesis is theology; its authors were inspired to write about the nature of God and humans and their relationship, not the physical nature or history of the universe. We look past the mistakes of Genesis in order to discover its theological truth.

And we must do this with the story of the Ascension. Similarly the Ascension is not about the change of position of Jesus from one place to another. The "lifting up of Jesus" is not a positional change; it is metaphor for his being taken into a higher life. The risen life is "higher." It is about his being raised to reign in glory. Just as when we are taken into God's presence, we enjoy a higher form of life.

Which is to say that Christ is not removed from one place to another; he is taken from his existence within time and space, and he is no longer bound by time and space. And because he is no longer of any given time or space, he is outside of these restrictions, and he is able to be present to us in every time and place.

Because we are creatures of time and space, we are tempted to think that God is of time and space. Well, he is of course in time and space, but he is not bound by them. For the space time continuum is part of our natural world. It is itself part of creation. God, acting outside of time and space, creates them as well. And God not being bound by time and space is a God who is available to each of us, and present to each of us, in whatever time and space we occupy.

When we poor earthbound, time and space bound, humans observe Ascension Day, we worship a God whose saving activity includes the return of Christ to the Father in such a way that he remains constantly present to us in a way that he could not be when he walked the earth.

Alleluia, Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia. Yes.
But also: Alleluia, Christ is ascended. The Lord is ascended indeed.
Alleluia.

Birthdays

Donna Evleth 10

Anniversaries

Terry & John McFee	4
Karla Allen & Spencer Carr	8
Betty & Al Clark	8
Shirley & Lee Siems	9

Updates from the Church Family

Here's to pomp and circumstance

Congratulations to Makenna Morck and Tyler Orr, our two graduating high school seniors. They are both great students, truly admirable young people, and much beloved by all our community. Makenna moves on to the University of Colorado, and Tyler will attend the Colorado School of Mines in Golden. They will do honor to both those institutions, even as they have to East Grand High and to St. John's. Don't forget where you came from, and come back to see us as often as you can!

Sailing, sailing—and other travels

Well, actually, it was more like steaming, steaming, as Jim Cartwright is just returned from a cruise down the Pacific Coast of Mexico, through the Panama Canal, and up through the Caribbean to Mobile, Alabama. He also visited friends in Austin, Texas, before returning home. He has great pictures of going through the canal!

Many others from St. John's have been coming and going; it is the season for traveling to avoid the mud. Recently returned are Loretta and Walt McLaughlin from Mexico, John and Terry McFee from Florida, Gene and Sally Ackley from Wisconsin, Kay Irvine from Nebraska (!), Al and Dorothy Jarrell, and Stu and Marilyn Findley both from Arizona, and John and Michele Simmons from California.

And recently departed for more exotic locations include Bruce and Patty Byrd to Hawaii, J.R. and Marit Faivre to Norway, Al and Betty Clark to Idaho, Betty Cranmer to Albuquerque, Beth Collins and Jim Magill to camping, and Ken and Joan Von der Heiden to parts unknown (at least to this writer).

Others who have been traveling over the last month or so include Ann and Lorie Wheeler, Gary and Kaye Piper, the Orr family, and Tom Papathakis and Lisa von der Haar.

We also look forward to the return of our snowbirds—John and Florice Lletzke, Bill and Judy Hardardt, Roxanne Singler, Carol and Keith Stott,

Lee and Shirley Siems, Dan and Susan McClean, and Dan and Sharon Pickett.

It is a wonder we have anybody in the pews these days!

from The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living Fr. Thomas Keating

Beginning the Spiritual Search for God

With my whole heart I seek you....

Psalm 119:10 NRSV

All the questions that are fundamental to human happiness arise when we ask ourselves this excruciating question: *Where* am I? Where am I in relation to God, to myself, and to others?... As soon as we answer honestly, we have begun the spiritual search for God, which is also the search for ourselves. God is asking us to face the reality of the human condition, to come out of the woods into the full light of intimacy with him. That is the state of mind that Adam and Eve had, according to the story, before their disobedience. As soon as they became aware of their separation from God, they headed for the woods. They had to hide from God because the loss of the intimacy and union they had enjoyed with him in paradise was so painful.

June 2010

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
		1	2	3	4	5
					2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER * 7PM HIGH SCHOOL BACCALAUREATE	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * NOON GRADUATION PARTY * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				8:30 AM JAVA LAVA MISSIONAL CONVERSATION * 6:30 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST				6:30 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 8 AM HABITAT HOBBLE * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9:30 AM MASS ON THE GRASS @ POLHAMUS PARK				8:30 AM JAVA LAVA MISSIONAL CONVERSATION * 6:30 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
27	28	29	30	31		
9 AM HOLY EUCARIST * 5 PM EVENING PRAYER ON LAKE @ GRAND LAKE MARINA				6:30 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY		