

THE EPISTLE

THE MISSION OF ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, A CENTRAL CITY CHURCH,
IS TO WELCOME ALL PEOPLE INTO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AND TO SERVE IN HIS NAME

THE RECTOR'S RAMBLINGS

Ida Brann turns 100 this month. Several weeks ago I got a call telling me that she had told one of our Eucharistic Visitors she wanted to go with us to the movie night, "For the Bible Tells Me So" at Trinity. She had read about it in the newsletter and bulletin. I held my breath. Blessedly, our dear Ida forgot that she had wanted to go. I thanked God for this because she is very frail and getting her there would have been nerve-racking. But I also thanked God that she wanted to go. 100 years old and still curious about the world. Spunky does not begin to describe Ida.

Visiting Ida, or talking to her on the phone is its own life experience. She is a force of nature. You have to wait for her to take a breath in order to say something yourself. 100 years old, she has a lot to say. And she says it in a way that is sort of like reading a James Joyce novel. (If you don't know what that means, ask Susan Wilson or John Washbush, our resident English teachers.) Eucharistic Visitors know that when they go to visit Ida they need some additional time. She's got a lot to say and means to say it!

And she is a holy woman. A recent story about her made me cry. Dorota, who just turned 25 a few weeks ago, went with Beth to visit Ida. Ida was Ida and regaled them with many James Joyce-like stories from her life. Eventually, as Ida took a discernible breath, one of them said, "It's time to pray now, Ida." And, instantly, Ida became quiet, folded her hands, and bowed her head in prayer. Ida and "quiet" are not usually words to find in the same sentence. But I suspect that Ida spends a fair amount of her time in prayer. She's 100 and getting closer to a full life with God every day. She lives in that thin place where we can almost touch eternity.

Dorota, she of the quarter century age, was deeply touched by the centenarian, Ida. Ida was already old when Dorota was born and Ida has been knowing and loving God for all that time. And she has been known and loved by God for all that time—hence the bowed head and clasped hands.

They all prayed the Lord's Prayer together—the prayer that binds us together across all sorts of differences, including age. Ida took Holy Communion with the reverence fitting someone who has been receiving it for many, many years and knows in her heart the power of the Sacrament. And Dorota, she of the quarter century, had her heart moved. God was so unmistakably present. As I heard the story, I wept.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>The Rector's Ramblings</i>	1
<i>Vestry Notes for 2009</i>	2
<i>Back to School Time!</i>	2

I read a letter to the editor in the magazine *Christian Century* recently that made me think of Ida, and Dorota. The very last sentence in the letter, written by a retirement center chaplain, was this: "Your task is not to bring God into the room where the patient is feeling lonely or confused or in crisis; you come into the room with an opportunity to illuminate where God is already there."

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

I thank God for knowing that Ida is still a member of St. James'. Happy Birthday, Ida.

With love, Mother Debra+

VESTRY NOTES FOR JULY 2009

The vestry met at the church on Monday, July 27, and after opening prayer, there was a heartfelt discussion as a result of the check-in question, "How has God changed you or something in your life this past month?"

The Treasurer's report noted that while pledge income was under budget for June, it is still slightly over budget year to date. In contrast, plate income is significantly over budget year to date.

Mother Debra's report noted a variety of issues including: increasing security problems at The Gathering, the consumption of alcohol on the property, and the efforts to curb these issues; completion of the building repairs is nearing the end; issues surrounding building development; and possible activities for upcoming social events—stay tuned!!

It should be noted that the diocesan Elder Ministry committee asked for a parish contact at St. James', and Jill Littlefield graciously agreed to be that person. Thanks to Jill for being willing to do this!

Additionally, Mother Debra initiated a discussion on leadership development and we discussed the first chapter of Peter L. Steinke's book *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*. Already, this book is proving to be very interesting.

The next vestry meeting is scheduled for August 19 at 6:15 pm.

Leanne Mittelstadt

IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME!

This is the time of year parents start their annual back-to-school shopping. They'll get the list from their school of the pens, pencils, paper and notebooks – and finding the materials can be a lot of fun. A couple of Sundays ago, I was talking with Kris Ochocki about how excited the children were last year at The Gathering when the Sundries distribution included a backpack full of all their back-to-school needs. (In addition, this put less stress on Moms and Dads to find the money to provide for these needs.)

We would like to repeat this gift again this year – and we need your help. Red Door Clothes has a number of kids' backpacks, but not the supplies to fill them. Could you, when you're at Target or Wal-Mart or wherever you do your shopping, pick up a Milwaukee back-to-school supplies list and see what you can find from the list as a donation. Perhaps a couple of boxes of crayons or a pack of paper. All the donations will go into our backpacks and help the children who come to Red Door Clothes start their year on the right track.

Teresa Jackson

Editor's Note: The Epistle is on vacation for August, and will return — rested, tanned, and its normal self again next month.