

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

Life has changed. My long-time canine world has been invaded—by a C-A-T. Now, to be fair, she's a sweet little calico with dark black, bright orange and sharp white markings. Her name is Skeeter. But to Jamie? She's vermin. Overnight everyone's life has changed. Skeeter now lives in the downstairs of my condo. She used to have free rein of a house. The stairs of the condo are now protected by oh-so-lovely wire barriers so that the dog does not jump to her death trying to get the cat, and so that the cat has a place of safety. Jamie is exhausted because she is on constant cat vigil. And Molly, the twelve-year-old other dog just watches it all with a confused look on her face, as in, "Can't you all just get along?" All in all, life has changed.

But I love Jamie. And my new housemate loves Skeeter. And so we are slowly working this out. We are committed to making all these relationships work out; and we understand that, even in our small world, relationships are important. For Jamie and Skeeter right now it probably seems a little overwhelming. But, in the end, it is likely to turn out better for them both (that is, if Jamie does not eat Skeeter while we work it out!).

Change is just hard. It's hard for animals; it's hard for humans. But change is part of the law of life. We stop changing as humans when we die. When we stop changing as church communities we are in the dying process.

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So, change is part of the life of St. James' right now. Our music program is being re-invented and what it will finally look like we don't know yet. We are exploring the best way to use our building assets which may include razing parts of our building complex. We are still recovering from January's flood. And, blessedly, new people continue to come and, sadly, some people choose to leave. Change.

There are some things that do not change. God, who remains equally everywhere, is still God. Still there, still available, still loving us.

The people who make up the community of St. James' are still, mostly, here. Still loving one another, still laughing, still praying and worshiping that same God who is still here.

And these, of course, are the important things: God, and love, and prayer. And these are all still here. And they always will be as long as there is a St. James' Episcopal Church.

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Some months ago I taught Keltie to pray before meals. He lives in Madison now and I don't know if he still does it, but perhaps I need to teach Jamie and Skeeter about prayer. People who pray together regularly do not leave one another and they tend to be kindly affectioned one to another—even in the midst of great change and significant differences. I don't know if this will work for canines and felines, but it is worth a try!

I love you all.

~~Mother Debra+

VESTRY NOTES FOR JUNE 2009

Due to the extreme heat, the vestry met at Mother Debra's air-conditioned home on Wednesday, June 24th. The check-in question, "What are you particularly thankful to God today?" elicited many responses, including multiple ones about air-conditioning! Of course family, friends, and work issues also were raised.

The Treasurer's report noted the good news that pledge and plate were up for the month of May, but warned of an increase in the building insurance costs in effect in July. A very bright spot was that the Diocese has determined that in these financially troubled times, it will forego one month's payment of parish assessment. The vestry decided to skip the July payment. Many thanks for this gracious gift from the diocese.

Mother Debra's report covered building use issues; the development of the music program in the next six months; St. James' connection with Common Ground; and leadership- and community-building within the parish.

There were updates on the progress of dealing with the results of the January flood; St. James' outreach with sundries and Red Door Clothes; and miscellaneous issues from the daily life of the parish.

Mother Debra gave the closing prayer and blessing, and the vestry reluctantly exited into the hot and humid evening.

Gust Olson



Confirmation & Reception, May 30, 2009, All Saints' Cathedral:
Paul Cooke, The Rt. Rev. Steven Miller, Sam Zainer, Marj Zainer

MOTHER DEBRA'S 10 YEAR CELEBRATION AND PENTECOST

This was a doubly special day at St. James' and many of the congregation wore red for Pentecost. We had all the candles and candelabras lit, with the full "smells and bells" and glorious music for our most festive gathering. Many guests attended who were longtime friends of Mother Debra and former Jamesians. Our special coffee hour in the parish hall included lots of tasty foods. Mother Debra was presented with a generous gift certificate to her favorite bookstore and a most unique and beautiful scrapbook of photos of the past 10 years here. There was a large timeline banner on the wall and folks signed their names where they first came to St. James'. The photo below says it best:



Jill Littlefield

ATTENTION, ST. JAMES' LADIES!

I have been a member of the Daughters of the King for about a year now. I just love being a Daughter. Being a part of the Daughters has helped me shape my daily prayer life, give me a support system that I would not otherwise have had, and taught me things about my faith through study.

So if you enjoy praying, having a group of women as a support system, and to learn more about your faith through study, come to a meeting or two. Check it out. See if becoming a Daughter is what God is calling you to do. We would love to see you there!

We meet the second Wednesday of every month at 6:30 PM in the lounge. Or you can talk to Loraine Garner, myself, or any Daughters to find out more information.

For His Sake,
Teresa Jackson

LIVING MEMORIES AT CAMP WEBB

Susan and I recently bought a printer-scanner-copier. Being the nerd that I am, I've satisfied my inner geek by turning prints, negatives, and slides into digital images that I can label, file, and archive. The most recent stack that I put through the process were all from 1985, when I was participated in a teen mini-week at Camp Webb.

During that magical summer I stayed at one of my favorite places in the world, along with some of my favorite people. We participated in the typical swimming, canoeing, sailing, archery, arts'n'crafts, and horse-back rides. But we also sang, discussed our teenage faith, played games, and participated in worship in the woods.

Each of those separate events might have been memorable by themselves, but there was more going on at Camp Webb than a fun time or tasty smoores. What I remember most about my time at Camp Webb is that we had Christ-filled experiences surrounded by the beauty and

peace of nature.

A lot has changed in the history of this ministry, from its original location at Nashotah House in the 1950s, to its years up in Wautoma, to its current location of the Indian Mound Boy Scout Camp in Oconomowoc. I recall sleeping in tents that were set up on wooden platforms; the campers now sleep in cabins! While details like this are significant to old Camp Webb alumni, looking back at *The Way It Was When We Were Kids*, what really matters is that the ministry hasn't changed much at all. It's still an amazing and vibrant part of the ministry of the church.

It still provides the youth of our Diocese a unique "opportunity to learn more about themselves and others, to discover more about the Episcopal Church, to develop a greater spiritual awareness, and to encounter Christ through living and learning in God's creation." (Thanks to <http://www.campwebb.org/> for that

quote.) And Camp Webb is awesome! Kids as young as third graders and as old as seniors in high school attend one of three week-long sessions, coming together from various urban and suburban backgrounds into a beautiful natural setting. During the week, they make new friends, praise God, and live in the moment.

Sure, they'll return home with one sock missing, some mosquito bites, a new repertoire of songs, and photos (probably digital ones). But the best part is that they had some time away from the frantic pace of pop culture to get a vantage on how God is part of their lives. That will stay with them forever and give them something to look back upon in their adulthood.

If you, or someone you know is interested in attending Camp Webb, check out <http://www.campwebb.org> for information and registration.

Robert Wilson

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GENERAL CONVENTION

For many weeks now, Mother Debra has been asking the people of St. James' to keep those attending General Convention in their prayers. Well, since General Convention begins in less than a week, I thought it might be good to see just what this thing called "General Convention" is anyway.

At a parish level, we know that St. James' is governed by our elected vestry and our Rector. We also know that we as a parish community are part of a larger group of parishes called the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee. Our diocese is also part of a larger organization, The Episcopal Church (TEC). The Episcopal Church is also more loosely connected to the world-

wide Anglican Communion.

The organizational bodies within TEC are many, varied, and can be quite a bit of alphabet soup, especially as a list of acronyms. The primary governing body of TEC is the General Convention, a representative body in two houses, much like the US Congress. It first met in 1795 to create the Constitution of the church and The Book of Common Prayer for use in America.

The two houses of the General Convention are the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. All bishops of the church, active and retired, are members

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FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO REVISITED

Controversy surrounding homosexuality in the Church is everywhere – we see division over this issue in the Anglican Communion, The Episcopal Church, and even in our own diocese. One would think it impossible to discuss homosexuality and religion without ruffling feathers. And yet, on the last weekend of June, 24 Episcopalians from St. James' and Trinity, Wauwatosha, came together to learn, discuss, and better understand what the Bible has to say about homosexuality through a film called *For the Bible Tells Me So*.

The film tells the story of five families from different religious backgrounds and how each reacts, responds, and grows after learning that one of their children is gay or lesbian. The stories were very touching and made it clear that the way religion and sexuality interact has hugely personal ramifications. Additionally, it examines the six biblical passages that refer to homosexuality with the help of biblical scholars and religious leaders.

What each scholar emphasized was the same thing Mother Debra teaches us in Adult Education: historical context is everything when reading the Bible.

These various scholars and leaders made the case that the passages often quoted as “proof” that homosexuality is a sin are actually not about homosexuality at all and have been misused by literalists to condemn gays and lesbians.

I saw the film two years ago at a film festival, but I felt like I was watching it again for the first time at Trinity. For me, the difference was watching it with fellow Episcopalians. I was proud to see Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the movie, describing God's infinite love and compassion for all people. I was inspired to hear the story of The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire, as he courageously answered God's call to the Episcopate despite the threats and outrage of those who opposed him because of his sexual orientation.

And, most of all, I was moved by the people of faith who came together on a Saturday evening to learn from one another and engage in meaningful dialogue about an issue that divides our nation and our Church.

Dorota Pruski

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of the House of Bishops, which is chaired by the Presiding Bishop. The House of Deputies is equally divided in membership between clergy (priests and deacons) and lay deputies, elected by their diocese at diocesan conventions. The House of Deputies is chaired by the President of the House, Bonnie Anderson. According to the Constitution of the church, the House of Deputies is the senior house of the two. I was elected as a lay deputy to the House of Deputies at our local convention. Mother Debra was a candidate for the clergy deputation and was elected an alternate.

Much of the work of convention is carried out by committees that consider legislation, discuss and per-

fect it. It then goes to both houses for debate, amendment and voting. Deputies do not represent the mind of their diocese and vote as they think their diocese would want. Deputies are to vote their mind, for the good of the church. This allows for debate to influence them; that is, for the Holy Spirit to have the room to act on those involved in doing this special work of the church.

This year, a few of the many, many, many resolutions (880+ pages of briefing material have already been sent out to be read before the convention) deal with such things as health insurance for the entire Episcopal Church, revision to the Canons (laws) dealing with clergy misconduct, new names

added to our church calendar, responses to some of the actions of the last convention, and many other things.

The General Convention is described as one of the most awe inspiring events in the world. I admit I am more than a little apprehensive about my role in it (alright, I am nervous and a little scared). But it is a most special way that God works with and through his people to care for his church. We will be in Anaheim from the 6th of July through the 17th of July. PLEASE keep us in your prayers for the next few weeks and look for updates from the Milwaukee delegation about the doings of our General Convention.

John Washbush

WAS IT ODD OR WAS IT GOD?

A company adjacent to the freeway near Waukesha has a very Christian sign that is changed every few months. I often read the words and sometimes enjoy what's written, and sometimes agree, and other times don't like its exclusive kind of message.

Well, at the end of April I had *plenty of time* to ponder this one!

About 11 AM, I was going to Milwaukee for my piano lesson and spiritual direction appointments. I was happily driving in the middle lane of the 3-lane roadway, when suddenly, in *my* lane, there was a **very large black something**. With cars on either side of me, and not wanting to swerve too much and hit one of them, I hit it, and it turned out to be a very large truck tire or wheel.

After the jolt, I slowly crept towards the right lane and then realized I couldn't get to the nearest exit. I pulled off to the far right side of the freeway and stopped. I was glad I had a cell phone to call AAA, my piano teacher, and spiritual director. A sheriff stopped briefly to offer assistance. I then prayed some and was so grateful I wasn't hurt and had been able to keep control of the car and hadn't hit anyone else.

Slowly I became very aware of this sign. With much traffic rushing by and waiting well over an hour for AAA to come and haul my car away— (I had 2 right flat tires with a huge hole in one and I also needed a new wheel), I had plenty of time to look at and ponder the words on the sign. There wasn't much else to look at or do! I certainly wasn't *where* and *doing what* I had expected to do that day. I did try to just be present to where I was looking at this SIGN—with many emotions bubbling up.

Now... Was it ODD or was it GOD? as someone I know often says. Was there something I could learn here?

Jill Littlefield



THURSDAY, NO CHOIR

It's Thursday night as I sit writing; it's an unusual feeling. For the last thirty years, the better part of my Thursday nights have been spent at St. James', rehearsing with the choir. During those thirty years, I have had the opportunity to make music with and be encouraged and formed by four very fine music directors. Each had particular talents, preferences and styles, and I learned about music from all of them. But from Karen Beaumont, I have also learned about being a mature, thoughtful, and faithful Christian.

A rehearsal with Karen was all about respect:

- * Respect for our time; we always started and ended on time, no matter who might be tardy.
- * Respect for the music; we were always expected to do the best we could, which was often better than we thought possible. Of the four leaders I've known, Karen has managed to do the most with the least. Her standards have always been high, for us certainly, but most especially for herself. We knew when we didn't meet her expectations, but she never shamed us. And when we earned her praise, we knew it was sincere, and it felt good.
- * Respect for the people of St. James'; she always reminded us that the people deserved to hear music worthy of our history and heritage.
- * Most of all, respect for God. We were there to worship, not to perform.

As you may know, Karen's role at St. James' is changing, but we will still be privileged to hear her at the keyboard on a regular basis. Karen is and will continue to be a member of the parish, and as any parishioner who has given so much talent, prayer, quiet support and love to St. James', she is worthy of our love, gratitude, and respect in return.

We will all be asked to accept changes if St. James' is to continue our work and grow in God's service. We will be trying on different styles of music in our worship as we discern how St. James' can responsibly support a music ministry which furthers our unique mission to welcome and serve. On occasion, you may be asked to put the good of the parish above your personal preferences, and you may not like it much. But whenever you feel irked or put-upon by change, stop and reflect on the best example I know of one who continues to put the needs of the parish first, with graciousness and respect... Karen Beaumont.

Loraine Garner



STUMP THE PRIEST

Dear Priest,

I have always thought it sounds a bit odd and never understood why we are “bold” to pray the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus gave us the prayer. Didn’t He expect we would use it? Why do we have to be bold to use a prayer Jesus gave us to use?

Signed, Confused

Dear Confused,

This is one of the most fun questions I have received in a while. I honestly do not know why The Book of Common Prayer uses the word “bold” in the invitation to the Our Father/Lord’s Prayer. You are sure right that Holy Scripture tells us that Jesus prayed this prayer when asked by his disciples how to pray. And I do think Jesus intended for his followers to pray along the lines of that prayer.

But as I have been reflecting upon your question, I think that it is a bold act, a courageous act, to pray that prayer—even if Jesus gave it to us, or perhaps particularly because Jesus gave it to us.

To call God “Father” implies a filial relationship between us and God and that’s pretty bold. We are crea-

tures and God is God—but God is also, “our Father.” Pretty bold for us to assert that.

To ask God for God’s Kingdom to come is about as bold as it gets. I wonder when we pray it, do we really *want* God’s Kingdom to come? Our lives would look very different if we really worked towards that reality every day.

Asking God to forgive us our sins as we forgive others is also a very bold and courageous thing to pray for. Are we really ready to be forgiven? By God? By others? By ourselves? And are we really ready to forgive others?

Praying that we not be led into temptation continues the boldness of this prayer. Do I really want to be led away from temptation? In what ways do we limit our access to those tempting things that take us from God or turn us away from one another?

All in all, this is a pretty bold prayer and we are bold indeed when we pray it.

I hope this helps.

Signed, the Priest

MEDIA HUB AT GENERAL CONVENTION 2009

The Episcopal Church’s triennial General Convention, to be held July 8-17 in Anaheim, California, may be experienced on-site and remotely due to an innovative Internet feature called the Media Hub. Seven areas will be featured on the Media Hub: calendar, video stream, Flickr photos, activity area, legislative tracker, Twitter feed, and resources.

The largest area will be the live video stream of events such as briefings, legislative hearings, and special events. The live stream will

vary every day, but the programming will all be listed in the calendar.

Another area, the Flickr photos, will feature snapshots of aspects of life at GC09. The Activity area will aggregate content relative to GC09 from a wide array of sources, including Episcopal News Service; articles from diocesan publications, religious and secular press; comments from people on Twitter and Facebook; and other sources.

The legislative tracker will enable

viewers to follow the life of a resolution and ties directly into the actions and votes of GC09 through the GC database. Media Hub’s Twitter feed will be a source for announcements. The final area, the resource section, will list links to maps, things to do in Anaheim, directions, and other information.

The Media Hub will go live shortly before General Convention, tentatively July 1. It can be accessed at: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org>.

(From the Episcopal News Service)