

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

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

I don't know if any of you have ever seen the cremation remains of a human being. They aren't dust. They're sort of gritty—bone does not become dust, precisely, in the cremation process.

But whatever consistency comes back after a cremation it is always heart stopping to me to see a life reduced into a small box that I can carry in one hand. It's a humbling reminder of the words that we hear on Ash Wednesday as ashes are imposed on our foreheads, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Dust. But not just.

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One of my closest friends died two years ago. I presided at her Memorial service and her ashes were present at the service. Next to the ashes was a picture of her when she was vibrant and alive. I remember Kathleen's high and loud Irish laughter. I remember her ability to tell a good story and a good joke. I remember her gift of song and lyrical voice. I remember all the trouble that we got into as young nuns cavorting together at the Motherhouse. Kathleen will never be dust to me. She lives on in my memories and in my heart.

What the church prompts us to do during the season of Lent is to go into the wilderness of the parts of our lives that need some tending. We are asked to spend time in prayer, asking God to help us in this timeless endeavor that is hard to do on our own. Lent is a time to look at our own hearts so that our lives are lived in such a way that they honor the fact that we are made in God's image. Lent is a heart to heart season. I examine my own heart so that when it touches your heart you will find God there.

I found God in Kathleen's heart. I miss that part of God that I knew in her.

I pray for each of you a holy Lent. I pray for you God's presence. I pray for you time with Scripture. I pray for you holy worship. I pray that your hearts are each and achingly touched by God's Lenten grace.

Dust. But not just.

With my heart's love—Mother Debra+

FROM THE DEACON'S BENCH

“Silence”

I mentioned to a church friend that I was thinking of writing about silence. His reaction was “That’s scary!” We talked briefly about why it’s scary.

We really cannot talk about silence, or even think about it until we find it. And, my friends, that may not be easy when we look at all the ways we cover it up. Chances are when you go into a house, you will hear a TV blaring or it will be soon.

Watch the number of people with earplugs and CD players even when “talking with friends.” Watch people get on the bus and either shove in their earplugs for music, or grab their cell phone and start talking (not always quietly: some people think you have to shout into the cell phone to be heard!) We even manufacture a motorcycle which is treasured because of its special noise!

When we’re alone at home, we tend to have the TV on, or some sound-producing gadget in the background. We seem to feel protected, or lonely or whatever as long as we have some noise around. And sometimes having the noise around allows us to escape.

What is it about silence that drives us to such lengths to avoid it? Silence can be provocative. It gives our minds a time to think. It may cause us to think about matters we’ve been avoiding thinking about and dealing with. It may provoke us with taking a serious look at ourselves. It may provoke us into talking from our hearts to God and into being silent again to find His an-

swer for us.

Silence can cause us to release control. In silence we come face to face with ourselves. In doing so we may see things we don’t like and need to change. Willingness to change requires willingness to relinquish the old ways we have held on to.

Silence can lead us into a closer relationship with God. Sitting silently, at first we find our racing thoughts jumbling around from one idea to another in no particular order. In time we might be able to close down the race track in our mind and get to one or two thoughts that have been troubling us. Then is the time to put them before God in prayer. Then is the time to hand them over to God. Then is the time to allow the silence to take over as we can open our hearts to God knowing that answers will come – maybe just not in our time schedule and maybe not the answers we wanted, but they will come.

Perhaps the “scary” part of silence is experiencing the process of allowing ourselves to be alone with God and to be open with God with our innermost thoughts and secrets.

Writing this article has made me take a look at the place of silence in my own life. I realized how much I treasure that time of silence we observe before starting the Eucharist on Sunday, and the time of silence following the sermon.

I’m remembering a symphony concert I went to. There were three times when silence in the course of

playing three diverse pieces played a role. Concert etiquette is not to applaud between movements in a piece, but to wait for the conclusion. The silence between sections allows the players a brief respite and prepares the audience for a possible change in direction in the music. In the piece being played, intervals of silence were interrupted by a scattering of applause. Silence interrupted.

The next piece was Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” a piece filled with runs up and down the piano keyboard so fast and so loud that you wonder how the soloist can move his hands and not miss a note. Then, suddenly, the pianist is quietly playing single notes and pausing ever so briefly between some. Silence to make an impression.

Finally, the orchestra played a symphonic poem by Duke Ellington, “Harlem.” You know it wasn’t quiet and it incorporated all genres of jazz and blues. Near the end the percussion section took center stage with drums ranging from timpani to bass drum, snare drum, dance band drums – all building up to a blasting blaring thrilling climax of the whole orchestra – and suddenly it was over. Ever so briefly there was silence, before the audience was cheering and applauding. WOW silence!

Normally after a concert I will remember some parts for a day or so. Now it’s been a week or more later as I write this, and I still think about it. I have come to realize that

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FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

When I have organ students who are currently working as professional musicians, I will encourage them to plan the date for when they will “perform” a work they are preparing. I had a student at one time who was reluctant to do that. “I don’t want to schedule it,” she said, “until I feel I am ready to play it.” I laughed and said, “Well, when you find the secret to feeling ready to play a piece, let me know. I never feel ready!”

I think this applies to all of our lives, including our prayer lives. Recently, I read a book by Father Robert Llewelyn, known for his studies and writings on Julian of Norwich. When he was a young priest, he had the opportunity to walk with the ten superior of the Anglican religious order, the Cowley Fathers, an order known for its work in spiritual direction. “Father,” the young Llewelyn asked, “what techniques do you use for prayer?” The superior answered, “Well, I kneel down and hope for the best.”

Karen Beaumont

FIRST GAME NIGHT A CERTIFIED SUCCESS

On January 31st, thirty-four Jamesians of all ages gathered for soup, fellowship, and games. The opportunity for extended “play time” is important—both because it helps further develop our relationships and because we learn new and fascinating tidbits about each other. Here are some of the highlights:

1. Dawn Doerr makes delicious and clever Scrabble board cakes
2. Susan Nusser can channel various rock stars (my personal favorite was Cher)
3. Jackie Laska makes up her own rules for “Celebrity”
4. We discovered Mother Debra’s childhood nickname
5. As a group, geography isn’t our strong suit
6. Our soup-making talents are impressive
7. We like to laugh and play
8. Two and a half hours didn’t sate our competitive drive or our sense of fun. As a result, expect Game Night II later this year!

Susan Wilson

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in all of that beautiful music the briefest time of silence was the most important.

We all need more time of silence – even if a brief WOW silence. We need time to reflect, time to shut out our noisy world, time in quiet, to get closer to and listen to God. We need silence to look at ourselves even if it seems scary.

During Lent we give up something we treasure or are addicted to as a way of penance. I’ve decided to give up noise and seek silence.

Deacon Ned



Cake by Dawn Doerr; Photo by Robert Wilson

VESTRY NOTES FOR FEBRUARY 2009

After opening prayer, our February 18th Vestry meeting began with the important business of appointing Loraine Garner as Treasurer and Robert Wilson as Vestry Clerk for the upcoming year. Thanks to Loraine and Robert for serving the parish in these vital roles.

Our check-in allowed everyone to reflect and share on the topic of how God was changing us this week.

Major topics of conversation from the Rector's Report included the ongoing progress with the insurance company following our flood; continuing radical hospitality to visitors; correspondence from various individuals and groups; and this year's parochial report, the annual report that looks at, amongst other things, the growth of the parish. One item of note from the report is that while our number of baptized members has increased (praise God!), our weekly Sunday attendance has not experienced a corresponding increase.

Additionally, the group considered the forming of a Core Team that will look at planting deeper roots for Common Ground here at St. James, two more chapters of our book discussion, ideas for additional sundries collection and promotion, and a celebration of Mother Debra's 10th Anniversary at St. James.

Our table was full this week as, in addition to clergy, aspiring clergy, and vestry members, we welcomed Mother Martha from Racine and Marge Kiss, our visiting Diaconal Postulant. The more the merrier!

We completed our evening with prayer and a blessing.

Susan Wilson

MEET MARGE KISS

Ed. Note: Marge Kiss, St. James' Deacon Postulant through April, was asked to tell St. James' a little about herself. What follows is Marge's story.

Born and raised on the Southside of Milwaukee, one of my favorite haunts was Goldman's. And although I lived for short periods of time in Colorado Springs, CO, Wiesbaden, Germany and Dayton, OH, I have this theory, that one can not escape the Southside of Milwaukee. I am now living in Bay View with my two cats: Salt (a 15-year-old tabby) and Cheeto (a 4-year-old, 14 lb. 10 oz., coon cat.)

I think they represent how diverse my life's journey has been. For 25 years I was in education, first as a teacher and then as a principal. I worked primarily in parochial schools, my last place being at St. Leo's on 24th and Locust. For 5 years I worked as a property manager with National Realty Management, Inc.; and most recently, I was a title examiner for Heritage Title Services. Today, I am retired and loving it.

Travel and reading are two of my favorite pastimes as well as taking pictures of the sunrise over the lake. One of my favorite passages from scripture is: *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord* (Joshua 24:15). It has long been hanging on the wall of my apartments and living in my heart. It shapes my call to ordained ministry. I am truly grateful to be part of your welcoming, worshipping, giving community.

Marge Kiss

OUR OLD GAL

There are many of us who regularly refer to our St James’ building as “Our Old Gal.” As a quickly-aging gal myself, I certainly understand the idea of needing more “maintenance” to keep up with the demands of daily life. It’s no different for Our Old Gal.

We are now in the process of putting together a group as a Building Committee. The beginning focus for this committee will be to work with Mother Debra and the Vestry in organizing and carrying out projects related to building and property upkeep as well as starting to determine which projects left in the wake of our recent flood we can complete ourselves.

Currently people have been contacted based on their positive replies of interest in building issues in our Stewardship Time and Talent surveys. We are a mixed group, some of us with some specific skills and others who are willing to offer the grunt labor that will

be needed to carry out projects. This group will have the challenging opportunity to be involved in the setting where the ministry of St. James’ takes place. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please let Mother Debra, Sue Gillman or Gust Olson know and we will make sure you get involved in whatever level you’re able.

There is no specific ability level required and all members of the parish are encouraged to help out. Most of the organized events will not only accomplish a specific goal, but will allow us to spend time together in what usually turns out to be a fun way to get something done. We will be spending time together as the group of Christians that we are, and it is that group that breathes the life into the walls of Our Old Gal!

Sue Gillman

SUNDRIES ROUNDUP

Have you saved your sundries from Christmas, New Year’s or recent work-related travels? Please bring them to St. James’ and place them in the wicker basket that will be placed at the crossing table.

Have any ideas how we might gather more sundries? How about work, school, or other organizations you know of who would enjoy doing an ingathering for a worthy cause. I would be happy to share stories, pictures or, even, provide them an opportunity to experience firsthand where the sundries end up through volunteerism.

If you are new to St. James’ we have a ministry called “Sundries on the Avenue.” We distribute sundries at The Gathering (food program) every fourth Saturday of the month and we collect sundries to distribute at Our Saviors Lutheran (which houses the Outreach Ministry of Central Cities Churches [CCC].) The food pantry is serving over 700 individuals & families a month. Sundry items have become a luxury.

See Kris Ochocki or Linda Steiger for more info.



Deacon Terry jammin’ at New Beginnings — see the article by Robert Wilson on the next page

NEW BEGINNINGS

I'm not prone to wearing jewelry other than my wedding ring, but I'm currently wearing a bracelet made out of chained fishing swivels! This bracelet is a memento from *New Beginnings*, a spiritual retreat for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders on February 21st and 22nd. All of the participants, sponsors, and staff received them and snapped them into place around their wrists. Why would we wear such odd trinkets? I can assure you it's not meant as a fashion statement. It's meant to grab your attention and lead us to a conversation about becoming "fishers of men" and witnessing our faith!

Outside of Zion Church in Oconomowoc it was snowing heavily and the ice fishermen and fisherwomen were huddling in their huts on the frozen lake. Inside, the energetic group of New Beginning teens and adults were rocking out to songs of praise! (Be sure to ask Deacon Terry about his fine guitar strumming for the song, "Walkin' In The Light" [*Ed. See picture previous page*].) At other moments during the Saturday-Sunday retreat, people was playing, laughing, sharing, and acting in skits. We laughed that a handful of Academy Award nominations should have been handed out to the talented staff! Meaningful discussions centered on friends, parents, siblings, Jesus, and middle school.

Interest has been building as youth in the Diocese of Milwaukee look for exciting ways to grow in their faith. That exuberance was evident in the group of young Christians who had gathered together. With these cool weekends to testify and share our personal stories, New Beginnings will continue to be an awesome event in the lives of middle-schoolers. As we returned to our homes and individual parishes after the closing Eucharist on Sunday, our families and friends could see that we had more than just a symbolic bracelet on our wrists. We were adorned with the light of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit!

Robert Wilson

CORE TEAMS FOR COMMON GROUND

On April 13th, 2008, over 20 members of St. James' attended the founding convention for *Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground*. St. James' declared its intention to become a member. Seventy plus organizations were involved and over 2500 individuals attended. There was excitement and lots of energy.

In 2008 Common Ground core teams identified the issues we were willing to get involved with based on research and the possibility of success. Three issues were selected: 1) summer jobs for youth 2) zoning for Habitat Housing in Grafton and 3) affordable health insurance for small businesses. We were successful in getting the Milwaukee Common Council to approve \$250,000 in additional monies for the summer jobs youth program. This will double the size of the program funding 3,000 jobs. The zoning for the Habitat Housing has been approved resulting in more affordable housing. The health issue team is still hard at work, but making progress.

How was all this accomplished? *By Core Teams*. Each organization that supports Common Ground made the commitment to be involved through their core team. The core team members are individuals who are willing to attend Leadership Training; represent their organization at meetings, in letter writing campaigns, listening sessions, calling people at critical junctures, or showing up at political meetings just to demonstrate our numbers. People do what they can, when they can.

The core team at St. James' on April 13, 2008 was the twenty plus parish members who attended the founding convention. Numbers are significant at appropriate times, and our founding convention was a resounding success. Through every member that day we demonstrated to politicians, city, county, and state, and *ourselves* that we no longer were going to accept the

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KATHY NALL

Kathy Nall has a certain cachet here at St. James' as one of that special breed of "cradle" Episcopalians, but did you also know that she runs a worm farm? I suppose for some Jamesians that might be her most interesting feature!

Kathy grew up in central Pennsylvania, in Philipsburg, where she attended the local Episcopal church and sang in the choir and loved the "beauty of holiness" she saw in the liturgy. She was also part of the Jr. Hi and Sr. Hi choirs. At graduation, she went off to Thiel College, a small, Lutheran, liberal arts school in the western part of the state, and earned a degree in English and education. She married her first husband, Frank, in 1972, and they moved to Delaware, where she taught 1st grade, and had daughter Erin and son Stephen. Later, they moved to the Milwaukee area and settled in Rubicon where they lived in a beautiful Victorian home and worshiped at Zion Church in Oconomowoc.

The family moved to California in 1985; the couple divorced there and Kathy taught 2nd grade in the Los Angeles school system, before moving back to the Milwaukee area in 1995. In 2002 she married Bruce and hasn't looked back. One day they were at the Wisconsin Club and saw the red doors of St. James' across the street, and they've been attending ever since.

Kathy says of St. James' that it is a "community of people who embrace our mission statement... and are

truly caring for all." Kathy has just finished a six-year stint on Vestry, and considers it "a group that upholds the mission statement, weighing all its decisions against that and is grounded in prayer and caring for one another." Over those six years she has learned about the working of the church, herself, and about working in a group that is more than a committee, a group "with spiritual commitment." She is impressed how the St. James' community shows faith in the Vestry.

Kathy is presently serving on the Parish Ministry Discernment Committee, discerning with Dorota Pruski her call to ordained ministry. She was previously on a similar committee for (now Deacon) Kevin Stewart.

Now, what about that worm farm? It is part of Kathy's responsibility as a teacher at Neighborhood House of Milwaukee (Highland Blvd. and 27th St.), a multi-generational non-profit institution in the settlement house tradition, with children of many backgrounds and traditions. She's moved from teaching 8th grade to 2nd and 1st grades and kindergarten, and is now working with 1-2-year-olds. Her group has 8 children, and she has a co-teacher with her. The philosophy is experiential learning and allows her to be close to the children. I can testify from her musings at Vestry meetings that these children are dear to her heart and keep her young in mind and spirit. As does granddaughter Hailey, a 5 1/2-year-old who lives in Detroit. I wonder if Hailey is as fond of worms as her Grandma?

Gust Olson

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status quo. Currently and loosely, John Washbush, Beth Taylor, Dorota Pruski, Kris Ochocki and I are identified as "core team" people. It is time for St. James' core team to establish roots in the congregation.

Mark Fraley, our professional organizer, recently said "we are broad in organizations, we must now refocus and take the time to re-energize and solidly establish our core teams from within."

Would you like to know more? Have you ever wondered how you could make a difference in these com-

plex times? Do you want to be involved with a worthy issue and not feel out of place?

Talk to us, the St. James' parishioners listed above. Everyone has a story to tell about their experience thus far. We invite you to join us. Learn with us. Unite with a diverse group outside St. James' who have the same end goal: **Justice** for all.

Linda Steiger

P.S. Want to see how all this works? Join us on March 19 for a Delegates Assembly/Public Action @7pm@Mt. Mary College.

ALCOHOL USE AT ST. JAMES'

Recently, one of our newer members asked a very good question, "Is it okay or appropriate to bring alcohol—beer or wine—to a parish event?"

Here at St. James' we don't have alcohol at our parish events. We haven't for nine years. In 2000 the vestry voted that our parish events would be alcohol free. I am not a teetotaler. I enjoy a fine wine with dinner, or a beer with a brat in the summer (okay sue me, I grew up in Wisconsin, beer and brats are like ham and cheese!). But I completely supported and even prompted the vestry's action back in 2000. Here's why:

1. We don't need to have alcohol lubricate our fun at St. James.' Anyone who went to the recent game night knows that truth.
2. We have children at our parish activities. Do I need to say more?
3. We have recovering alcoholics at our parish activi-

ties. And while I understand that there is a school of thought that says keeping alcohol away from people who are recovering alcoholics is not helpful to them because they need to learn how to be around alcohol, I wonder if the church is the place where we want them to get that learning.

4. People have to drive to get to St. James'. Drinking and driving do not match. Even the smallest amount of alcohol in our systems impairs the split second decision making that we need to be able to do when driving. Putting alcohol into our parishioners when we know they aren't likely going to be walking home, or even taking the bus, is just asking for trouble. I do not drink and drive. Not one drop. Not ever.

But the best reason is still the first reason: We don't need to have alcohol in order to enjoy one another and to be safe while doing so. God bless the 2000 St. James' vestry.

~~Mother Debra+

STUMP THE PRIEST

Dear Priest,

Why did we just change the colors in the church, and on the clothes you wear for church, to purple from green? I like the green better.

Signed, Greenie

Dear Greenie,

We don't use our colors as part of a decorating scheme. We change the colors of the church to reflect the various liturgical (worship) seasons we are in. Currently, we are in the season of Lent which began with Ash Wednesday. The color for Lent is violet or variously, a sort of bleached off white color. In truth, Anglican Prayer books have never designated any sort of liturgical color scheme. And, at the time of the Reformation, Anglicans abandoned color in their worship. But as part of a revival of medieval customs, Anglicans began to restore color in the nineteenth century. Most Anglican churches today, including our own, use modern Roman Catholic color practice. And, as I said, the color for Lent is violet. Green will come back with the first Sunday after Pentecost. Watch for it.

Signed, the priest