

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

Ten years together.

It does not seem possible that we have been together as a community of faith for ten whole years! God has been so very good to us during these years.

I was praying the other day about all of you and thought that the thing I will always remember the most about St. James' is the laughter. We laugh often together. And it is so good that we do.

At Linda Laska's funeral recently I preached about the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin's assertion that "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." If that is true then God is abundantly available here at St. James'. Our worship together is rich and joyful and our fellowship afterwards is filled with laughter. I am always so pleased that, not only do you all "love one another as God first loved you" but you also genuinely *like* one another. Indeed, after vestry meetings, I still have to shoo people out of my office to go home because they are having so much fun with one another.

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I have so many fun memories of these ten years:

*Vanda and Bill Healy's gift of an Iroquois boat trip in the Lake Michigan Harbor. I remember the singing and the dancing (and poor Sue Gillman who was absolutely green the whole trip.)

*The time that Ellie Turner impishly rigged up a lit Sacred Heart of Jesus and put it underneath the altar before worship and then watched from the choir for my reaction as I discovered it.

*John and Angel's tenth anniversary re-commitment ceremony reception (allowing for a bit of overkill on the decorations!)

*The time that a close friend of mine visited St. James' and was being evangelized. When she said that she really did not think that she could worship here regularly because I was the Rector, Bob Schwoch immediately quipped, "Oh, you get used to her after a while."

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*One of our yearly tradition times of Mass in the Grass at Mount Mary College and Mary Washbush having to hold my hair out of my face in a high wind so I could see the paten and chalice and be able to celebrate the Eucharist.

*Many vestry meetings over these past few years where the vestry worked hard and late to get the work of the church done alongside gales of laughter that often reduced me to gasping and tears.

*The Sunday of the Blessing of the Animals when my dear Katie got loose and streaked up the aisle towards my voice with Paulette and Kris running after her in hot pursuit.

*Fellowship times: from dinners at Botanos, or Peony's, or whatever that Polish restaurant was on the south side; to movie nights shared with Trinity; to Game Night I. I remember all those times as occasions of fun and food and much laughter. (P.S. I am looking forward to Game Night II!)

When I let my mind and heart play over these past ten years of our life together, I think of people who have gone before us to be with the Lord: Eleanor Turner, Bill Healy, Cathy Wester, Albert Schulke, Valentine Sabol, Blanche Smith, Hazel Maxwell, Alice Warmuth, Norbert Zeunert. All of them had their place and time in the joyful community of St. James'. All of them made me smile, and often laugh.

My life and ministry will be forever defined by the love and laughter that I have discovered here at St. James'. I will remember the passion with which you have grasped your identity and mission. I will remember the Sundays upon Sundays of wonderful worship. But mostly, truthfully, when I think of St. James', I will remember the laughter—and the love.

~~With enduring love, Mother Debra+

THANK YOU FROM MARGE KISS

It just doesn't seem possible that my time at St. James' is over. I was most blessed to be with you. You not only welcomed me, but you also accepted me—truly living your mission statement and commitment to radical hospitality.

I felt privileged to participate in your well choreographed liturgies as a sub deacon. The generosity of Gust and Mary to allow me to serve in their place touched me, and the kind guidance of Beth and Dorota made me feel less anxious. Being an integral part of the Palm Sunday liturgy as solo sub deacon and reader in the Passion started my Holy Week in a most profound

way.

You graciously allowed me to be an observer/guest at your vestry meetings and I was impressed with the solid work that is accomplished in those meetings as you respectfully share your ideas and listen to each other. I felt that same attention to each other as I joined you in evening Eucharist on Wednesday, the Episcopal 101 class and the adult education class.

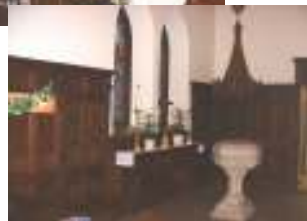
Being part of your Lenten program—The Power of Forgiveness—was especially significant for me and I will try to take my “critter” out less and less.

Your participation in the corporal work of mercy, burying the dead, speaks to the care you have for all persons, with the special loving touch of Jill's single flower on the casket and your keeping them in permanent memory with their names on a plaque. It was truly good to share the ministry with you, and I will be with you at these burials, as often as I can.

I enjoyed sharing Kris's ministry—Sundries on the Avenue—and will continue to be part of it in the months to come.

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**Easter 2009
at St. James':
Preparation,
Celebration
and
Fellowship**



Thanks to Loraine Garner for the photos

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The casual conversations during fellowship, over soup, while cleaning, just whenever, were the most fun and personable.

I especially thank Mother Debra, who willingly took on another re-

sponsibility—guiding me. She gave me great advice, solid suggestions and genuine encouragement. I was richly blessed to be with her and with you all.

You have imprinted yourself in my heart. Know you will be in my

daily prayers. I ask your prayers for me as I continue my journey. I promise to send you regular updates.

Marge Kiss

FROM THE DEACON'S BENCH

“Hitting a Home run for Jesus”

Many of you know that I'm a baseball fan: I love our Brewers! It's not always easy with all the ups and downs my team goes through. Bernie Jene and I are an informal prayer group: we've both prayed at different times for different players and the team. Recently, Bernie suggested that Manny Parra, the pitcher, could use our prayers. I've been praying for Bill Hall, one of my favorites, for a couple of years now, and can see some hopeful signs that he has turned the corner.

The game of baseball, in many ways, can be a metaphor for the way we live and grow as Christians.

Each one of us, when we take control of our lives, leaving Jesus behind... find ourselves striking out. Many times we fail to hit the ball with the right part of the bat, and hit a foul ball in our anxiety to get a hit. But as in life, hitting a foul ball gives us a chance to get it right the next time, the next time with Jesus.

Sometimes we have a walk which gets us on base and in position to score. The same in life, there are times when we let things happen, and we find ourselves able to move forward when Jesus gives a nudge in the right direction.

When a batter comes up to the plate, he's faced with making split-second decisions. He's armed with the knowledge of the types of pitches a pitcher may throw. He also knows what the team needs at that point in the game. All of us make decisions every day which may have a lasting effect on our lives. We may have the knowledge of the pros and cons of a particular decision: i.e., am I facing a curve ball, slider, or fast ball? We also know that we are part of a team

when we have Jesus at our side.

Based on his players' skills, a manager may choose to play short ball or long ball. In short ball, the object is to score by advancing players on base to score with a series of hits, be they singles, doubles or triples, by a team efforts. In our lives as Christians it is like living one day at a time: growing stronger and allowing Jesus to guide us each step of the way.

A team that plays long ball does so because it has players capable of hitting home runs. The negative side of long ball is that power hitters tend to strike out a lot, and are driven by “I” power in pursuit of a home run. As with each of us, there may be times when we feel driven to make major life-affecting decisions. The question we need to ask then is: Is this an “I” power decision or a Jesus-driven decision. Most successful baseball teams use a combination of long ball and short ball. Their success comes from a team effort.

Ultimately, the winning teams play as a team, not as a group of nine egos. You and I can choose to be a team of one, or to team up with Jesus. We all know that when we team up with Jesus, our lives are filled with wins.

We come together as a team at St. James' every Sunday morning, to receive encouragement and direction from our team manager (aka rector) and to be refreshed at Eucharist by the presence of Jesus Christ. We come together also to build up our team so we can hit home runs for Jesus, acting out our mission.

Play ball!

Deacon Ned

FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

I would like to take a brief moment to thank the choir, as usual, for their hard work and dedication. Being in the choir requires a person to always be “on” during worship. Not only do the members of the choir do this; they do it with a week-to-week commitment. If you think of it, take a moment to thank them before May is over for their efforts.

Karen Beaumont

VESTRY NOTES FOR APRIL 2009

The vestry met for its regular monthly meeting on April 22nd. The vestry shared “where have you seen signs of the risen Christ in your life?” before the business portion of the meeting began. There are a few things that I would like to highlight for you from this vestry meeting.

The total snowplow cost for this past winter came to about \$8000.00, this is down \$2000.00 from last year but this expense is still high. Let’s pray for less snow next winter, okay?

Mother Debra is still hard at work looking for ways

that we can utilize our property. The vestry voted to move forward with getting a survey done of the property, this is the next step in the process so that we can continue to move forward with this project.

The music program was thoughtfully discussed further as we are coming closer to the time of the change in our music director position.

The next vestry meeting will be May 20th at 6:15 pm.

Beth Taylor

METAPHOR-GIVENESS: THE FURRY PET ANALOGY

During this year’s Lenten series, Mother Debra led a group of us in discovering and discussing a topic that many of us probably take for granted: a little act called forgiveness.

One night, in the course of a discussion on the barriers to forgiveness that each of us hold, I drew a comparison that seems to have caught on:

What if the only thing that stood between you and forgiveness was not the person that wronged you, but rather a favorite, comfortable, little furry animal that you had to take out of its cage and stroke—everyday? That’s how it is for me.

Let’s take a little romp through my

(comical?) psyche and explore this a little more... Often times, as my mind wonders from place to place and act to act in my life, I find myself going back to and replaying awkward or embarrassing moments. Maybe it’s something someone said, or something someone did that made me feel less than great about myself.

By taking that moment (the animal) out the storage files of my mind (its cage), and reliving it (stroking the animal), I often find myself getting as mad—or madder, in some cases—at the situation. Before I know it, I find myself worked up into a tizzy and I’m coming up with witty retorts, things I wish I had said or had been strong enough to do, and sometimes even a path to-

wards retribution. We all do this in a way, and when we let our minds pick at the scabs that lie beneath the surface of our seemingly normal everyday clothes, it’s very difficult to grant that person—and as we learned, ourselves—the very real gift of forgiveness.

So, the next time you find yourself going to the cage, picking up that little animal that lives there, and giving it a good stroke, why not let it go? You just might find that it’ll make giving the gift (and it really is a gift) of forgiveness that much easier. Just let it go.

Ryan Cunningham

IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER AGAIN

It was Friday, March 21st and arriving home from a hectic day of work, I was really looking for the weekend. But rather than plan the evening meal, get to work on a household project, or sit down to catch my breath, I instead packed my duffel bag and headed back out the door. I was bound for Christ Church in Whitefish Bay, where I was attending the 84th Happening of the Diocese of Milwaukee. My role, as it was at the last Happening in Janesville, was to support and participate with the teenagers as a "Dad" for the weekend. As I arrived at the door of the parish house, I was anticipating a weekend of little rest but a lot of reviving of the spirit.

Deacon Terry also attended this Happening, being a spiritual director along side Father Drew Bunting. Deacon Terry and I get big grins on our faces when we see one another and inevitably start singing a stanza of "Walkin' in the Light," one of those syncopated Christian songs that always gets stuck in my head. All around us, high-schoolers were walking in the light of Christ, sharing their teenage energy, laughter, and love with one another. What an awesome experience!

Happening is a spiritual renewal retreat that is led by teenagers for other teenagers. These young adults shared their gifts with one another, organizing the games, performing the music, leading the prayers, arranging the activities, cooking and serving the food,

sharing their personal faith stories, and doing all of the behind-the-scenes support. While not lacking in moments of silliness and playfulness, the maturity of the subject matter shared throughout the weekend was impressive.

These "Happeners" came together and formed tight family groups, even though they had little to tie them together at first. Over the hours that they listened to some relevant talks from their peers and discussed some deep subjects, I could really see these young people form bonds with one another. And more importantly, they began to build personal relationships with Christ. The activities even gave me pause to reflect on my own spiritual journey and beliefs. "Walkin' in the light," indeed! By the time that Sunday arrived and we all returned to the real world, there was a sense of awakening and happiness on the faces of the 35 teenagers.

Happening is full of teen spirit and the Holy Spirit working through teens. I highly suggest that you check it out if you are in high school or know someone who is attending high school. Please feel free to talk to Deacon Terry or myself for any information regarding Happening #85, which is being planned to take place in Madison in November.

Robert Wilson

RENAMING ST. JAMES'

On Sunday April 13, 2008 at the Founding Convention of Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground, I had the privilege of representing St. James' on stage. Seventy-two organizations were present and each had a representative who took a turn at the microphone to: 1) state his or her name 2) name of organization and 3) announce organization's intention to become a member of Common Ground.

As I waited my turn, I rehearsed

saying "St. James' *Episcopal* Church." I always refer to St. James' as St. James' not St. James' Episcopal Church. By the time I stepped on stage, it had become very crowded. People were either at the microphone, signing the official poster board or simply trying to find a place to stand.

I went to the podium, said my three things, signed the poster (as neatly as I could) and found a place to stand. A group photo was taken and

it was over. Common Ground was official. It was exciting. Approximately 2500 people cheered.

After I left the stage, I was leaning against a wall reliving "a moment" I had while standing at the microphone. I was totally engrossed in my moment when I heard a voice say "do you know what you said?" or "do you know what you called St. James?" It took me a few seconds to focus to find that John

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TRAKEL TIME

My first impression of Mother Debra Trakel: “She’s late.” It was December, 1998, and St. James’ Search Committee had just recommended Mother Debra to the Vestry to be our next Rector. I was the Jr. Warden at the time. Mother Debra had agreed to drive over from Madison to celebrate a Wednesday-evening Eucharist and then be our guest at a reception, to “check each other out,” as it were. But as it was December, and it was Wisconsin, it was raining ice. The appointed hour came and went. Sr. Warden Mark Podratz and I paced... and paced... and worried. Was she alright? Had something happened to her? Should we have cancelled? How could we reach her? She finally arrived, understandably shaken after her harrowing drive. Then, she merely had to celebrate a Eucharist at an unfamiliar altar in front of a room full of people who knew exactly the way the Eucharist should be done, and were sitting in judgment, ready to pounce on any perceived wrong move.

My second impression: This lady knows what she’s doing. She handled herself with grace throughout the evening, but quickly established her parameters. We offered her a glass of wine (believe it or not, drinking was our custom at St. James’ receptions before Mother Debra came.) Her response was a firm, “I never drink and drive. Never. Ever.” It was clear very early that she is not easily diverted from what she knows to be right, and that she will assert the right with passion. And as I got to know her it became even more clear that the lady knows at least a bit about just about any subject, and has, most likely, taught it.

My third impression: Our new Rector had the pastoral gifts born of years of experience as a psychotherapist, a comfortable familiarity in the company of God, and an open and listening heart. As I served as her Warden and spent many hours in her company, I can personally speak for the skill and kindness with which she listened to my own deep hurts and offered not so much advice, as she offered herself, and God through her.

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Washbush (who was videotaping the proceedings) was standing next to me. I think I gave him a quizzical look and said “excuse me?” He had that impish look that John gets sometimes when he finds something humorous and it’s on you.

John proceeded to tell me that I had proudly announced that *St. Episcopals’ Church* was committed to Common Ground. Not only had the twenty plus members of St. James’ heard it, our Bishop noted it. And John has it all on tape.

Over the past year I have taken some good natured ribbing of how I single handedly renamed our church as *St Episcopals’ Church*.

Of course, everyone believes: I had

the jitters; I had focused on “Episcopal” while waiting; and/or I was taken aback by the bright lights centered on the stage while the crowd was in darkness. Some days I try to make myself believe those things, but “the moment” I had was very different.

As I relive my moment I feel like Jodie Foster who in one of her movies experiences a lifetime while on film eight seconds had passed.

As I looked out over the audience sitting in darkness, I was drawn into the bright white light. I saw a white dove and felt the presence of Jesus, very intensely. In a whisper, I heard, “You belong, this is the way.”

The next thing I heard was myself

saying ... Church, downtown Milwaukee.

Later when I was leaning against the wall, I was focused on: had this really happened and my enormous doubt of such things. Especially if it happens to me. It has given new meaning to the expression “would we recognize Jesus if he stood before us” and “would we name him.”

As the months go by the intensity of the experience is diminished. But I will remember the moment when The Holy Spirit spoke to me and I named the moment Jesus.

Linda Steiger

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One last impression: She knew what type of a church she wanted, and believed that it could be us. We were a group in disarray, focused on our own needs, our own pain. In a process that took years, she helped us find an identity, to articulate and embrace a mission. She taught us healthy parish systems, taught us what it means to be responsible, thinking members of the Episcopal Church. She taught us how to care for each other, to treat each other like real brothers and sisters in Christ. She taught us the meaning of radical hospitality, of looking beyond ourselves to see the Christ around us.

Yes, she is still occasionally late. It's a phenomenon that we Jamesians affectionately refer to as "Trakel Time." But I think it's just that she's a leader who moves in her own time and space. And now that I know what church can be, it's hard for me to remember St. James' before Trakel Time.

Loraine Garner

STUMP THE PRIEST

Dear priest,

How come we don't hear the Gospel of Mark read after Easter? I thought you told us when we moved into the new church year last Advent that we were now in the year of "Mark." What happened to Mark? Signed, Curious

Dear Curious,

Well, if you go and read the end of the Gospel of Mark, you'll see that it actually ends rather abruptly. There are actually two endings to Mark (and lots of spilt ink about which is the more accurate ending), but both of them end the Gospel without saying much about Jesus and His post-resurrection time. This time of the church year is the time after Jesus' resurrection and before His ascension to heaven. But if you want to read about that time you have to read John or Luke. So the church lectionary (3 year lesson calendar) shifts to those Gospels during this time. Not to worry, Mark will come back soon and we will steadily march our way through Mark until we get to next Advent and move from the Eucharistic Lectionary Year B, which we are in now, to Year C. During Year C we will focus again on the Gospel of Luke.

Signed, the priest

READING ON WORSHIP

Evelyn Underhill was one of the most articulate Anglicans of the twentieth century, bring the spiritual life to many through her retreats and writing. This comes from her book, *School of Charity*:

"...[the] inner life must make us more and more sensitive to that molding power, working upon His creation at every level, not at one alone: and

especially to the constant small but expert touches, felt in and through the very homely events, upon those half-made, unsteady souls which are each the subject of His detailed care. A real artist will give as much time and trouble to a miniature two inches square, as to the fresco on the Cathedral wall. The true splendor and heart-searching beauty of the Divine

Charity is not seen in those cosmic energies which dazzle and confound us; but in the transcendent power which stoops to an intimate and cherishing love, the grave and steadfast Divine action, sometimes painful and sometimes gentle, on the small unfinished soul."

Submitted by Karen Beaumont