

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

Recently I went to Minnesota to visit Deacon Antoine Linterieur who had a very serious stroke this summer. Deacon Antoine is an honorary Canon of our Cathedral here in Milwaukee and I have been privileged to know him for many years, continuing after his move to Minnesota about four years ago.

Deacon Antoine is a brilliant man. He is fluent in English, Italian, French and Latin. Normally, this is a wonderful thing. But Antoine's stroke was located in the part of the brain that controls his speech. And it was a serious stroke indeed. Initially, he was completely paralyzed on his right side. In addition, he could not speak at all. He has worked hard in therapy (and has received some excellent physical therapy) and can now walk unassisted with a walker or a cane. It's been a remarkable physical recovery.

But, although he has also worked hard in speech therapy, his speech is much slower to come back. He can speak whole clear paragraphs—in Latin! Or, his sentences will have two words in English, one in Italian and one in French. He has so much language in his brain it's very hard for him to communicate. And, of course, it's extremely frustrating since what he is saying is very clear to him, while we mono-lingual folks just have to stare at him in confusion.

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<i>The Rector's Ramblings</i>	1	I was deeply sad as I drove back to Milwaukee. I missed being able to talk with him and getting his somewhat quirky, albeit well-read views on things. He tried so hard to communicate with me during my visit with him. I was so proud of myself (and he so very pleased!) when I was able to discern what he was actually saying to me. He would ask often, using a phrase he could say, "do you understand me?" And mostly, I didn't.
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yond what we can put into words. Our only need is to turn our hearts towards God who is always ready to receive us, to listen to us, to understand us—and to respond.

I miss being able to talk with Antoine, myself. But I take heart in knowing that we both turn our minds and hearts to the same God who loves and understands us both. And for now, that has to be enough. Thanks be to God.

Mother Debra+

FROM THE DEACON'S BENCH

Periodically, we are forced to face the stark reality of our lives. This may happen because of some thing that has happened to a loved one or a friend (sudden illness, death, etc.). Or it may occur because of events in our own lives that force us to “get real.”

During the past month I have been given a big shove to deal with health issues and stubborn behavior that repulsed loving, caring advice and concerns expressed by family and friends.

The end result of my living on the edge, continuing to abuse my lungs, was a trip to the hospital for five days of care and coming home to a whole new lifestyle. A life style that includes a machine in my bedroom that makes oxygen connected to a long stretch of plastic tubing that ends up connected to my face. It means carrying a portable tank with me whenever I leave home. It means that the habit that led me here is out of my life today.

All this had led me to thinking about the fragility of life as we live it now. It led me to look at my own way of maintaining a dangerous lifestyle with my “I’m in charge” attitude as opposed to putting “God in charge.”

In the midst of all this reality thinking and life changing, I heard a commentary on change and accepting change in a life of ups and downs. This was from a man I’ve been helping to find sobriety. In it, he says, commenting on why he has survived despite predictions otherwise, “I made it ‘cause I know that there is a God and I know my arms was too short to box with

my God.” To this, I would add, looking at the need to accept change and God as the catalyst for it all: our arms are never too short to be open to the warm embrace of God’s grace.

Change keeps coming into our lives. Our willingness to accept change when we can see it is good, whether we want it or not, is difficult. However, when we allow God to be our partner and put it into His care, acceptance becomes easier. When we decide to stop boxing with God and put His love in charge, life truly becomes beautiful and peaceful.

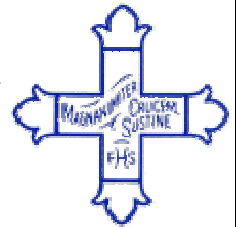
As I adjust to yet another change in lifestyle, I find that with God at my side, the changes I’ve undertaken and accepted are a whole lot better and my life is a whole lot better than it was before.

Now, if only I can remember each day where my stubborn me-in-charge ways led me and how wonderful it is to live with God in charge. That should not be as difficult as we make it, because being a part of a vibrant, loving community like St. James’ is a constant reminder of God’s presence in the helping hands and warm hearts around us.

Deacon Ned

PRAY-ERS ANONYMOUS

Even if you have never been part of a 12-Step group, you probably know how they work. You enter a room full of strangers and introduce yourself. Then you break open your heart and lay it on the table, and suddenly you're not with strangers anymore. Because each one of those people has been where you are; each one of those people is carrying the same burden you are; each one of those people knows that they need help to keep their life moving in the right direction. And everyone there knows that they can't do it alone.



You may not believe it, but that's sort of what it's like to be in the DOK. Every Daughter of the King has made the individual and personal decision to change her life for the better, and it's a challenge every day. Each of us has committed ourselves to a Rule of Life, which means we pray, and we serve. And we need each other to keep moving in the right directions.

By sharing our struggles with each other and with God, we learn and practice the art of prayer. It becomes our habit, our first line of defense against the world, and our strength.

Part of our reason for being is to offer that strength to the people of St. James'. If you have ever felt the need to lay your heart on God's table, anonymously, we will pray for you. You can send your message to our on-line prayer hot line, at STJDOK@aol.com. Or you can leave a note in the Prayer Box, which can be found at the DOK altar in the church.

Lorraine Garner

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

Over the course of the next month, some of you may be getting phone calls from members of the Vestry and the Common Ground core team, asking if you'd like to get together and spend some time getting to know each other better. Just to talk. There are no hidden agendas here – no pledge cards to hand out, ministries you'll be recruited for, or surveys you'll be filling out.

It's called a one-on-one meeting, and the leadership of the parish will be doing many of them in September. A one-on-one meeting is not chit-chat about the weather or the latest Brett Favre news (as fascinating as it is!); it's a chance for two people to get to know each other better by talking about the people, events, and stories that have helped make them who they are. It's a way of strengthening the relationships we've formed as members of this faith community. We sit next to each other on Sunday mornings or serve side by side through various ministries, but we don't necessarily know each other's stories or what each other values. We'd like to change that. So if you get a phone call asking for a meeting, consider it an opportunity to strengthen our community, and enjoy the conversation!



Dorota Pruski

AFTER THE GREAT FLOOD

It has been several months now: where do we stand on flood repairs? We have not yet completed all the repair work. The initial work of drying out went well. Walls were saved from extensive rot and we did not have a massive mold problem. Many holes were drilled into walls and behind removed baseboards and the repairs of the walls and replacements of the baseboards continues. The Gathering space took the most damage. The lights, walls, ceiling and other fixtures there were a first priority and all work is done. Repair and repainting of two damaged sexton's closets, the west entrance stairways, ceilings, and floors has been done and the baseboard repairs for these areas are just about finished. Necessary plumbing work is completed and repainting of the men's and women's restrooms is going on now.

The most exciting thing about repair work is that one

can look at rooms again and how they are being used. The chapel took extensive water damage and with the help of many it is restored and rearranged. It now is waiting for new carpet to be installed. The upstairs storeroom used by Red Door Clothes remains to be done. This space needs to be repainted and some wall and baseboard repairs made, but also so that RDC can install some shelving to enhance its operation.

We still are looking for help. The summer months have sped by and we need to move swiftly. If you can help, even for short periods, please contact John Washbush (414-430-7270 or johnwashbush@aol.com). We are on the downhill part of the journey, but still need to put in a last gasp to reach the finish line and celebrate our restored and rejuvenated spaces.

John Washbush

VESTRY NOTES FOR JULY 2009

Instead of the usual check-in type of question we had a special Listening Session with all members, so that we could learn how to do one. There will be about 4 similar Listening Sessions in the next few months giving time for the whole parish to participate – a chance to hear and be heard in small groups.

There are also some one-on-ones that will be taking place in the next month. The vestry learned how to do a one-on-one (a 30–45 minute meeting) to talk and share and get to know one another better. [Ed. See Dorota Pruski's article on page 2.]

John Washbush reported on the continuing flood damage-related repairs. The chapel is nearly 100% done and ready for the new carpeting. Progress continues on a few other repairs.

We passed the fire inspection well this year with nothing needed to be done.

We approved the same snow removal company (Stano) as the last 2 years and pray for less snow. This issue has caused us to be significantly over budget 2 years in a row.

Dorota Pruski was given unanimous Vestry approval for Postulancy and her endorsement form was joyously signed by all members!

The Vestry continues to read a chapter each month of the book, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, and this month's chapter was about balancing needs.

Jill Littlefield

Save These Dates

Sunday, October 4th: The Blessing of the Animals
Sunday, October 11th: Visit of Bishop Steven Miller, with confirmations and receptions
Saturday, November 21st: St. James' Games Night II

COMMON GROUND UPDATE

Common Ground has had an active summer, with leaders focusing on issues of health care, neighborhood safety, youth jobs, and affordable housing. We are a regional organization of churches (including St. James'), non-profits, small businesses, and schools from southeastern Wisconsin. We organize together because we are more powerful and able to affect change collectively. Currently more than 50 institutions are involved. Our commitment to strengthening our community has led us to five different issue campaigns.

The first addresses **health care**. Nationally, this is such a hot button issue. It's exciting that on a local level we're addressing this issue in a positive way as members are organizing a Healthcare Cooperative for small businesses, self-employed people, and non-profits to negotiate better premiums and enable more people to receive better access to healthcare. We worked with Senator Kohl to put a proposal for \$1.5 million to support the creation of

the Healthcare Cooperative. Two campaigns are related to **neighborhood safety**. In Sherman Park, members have done neighborhood walks, met with safety officials and local leaders, and strategized a campaign to focus on public safety, traffic, street signage and lighting. In the Amani neighborhood, members are concentrating on restoring a specific cluster of abandoned and boarded up houses.

The summer **youth jobs** program was very successful. After a year of hard work and meetings, we secured an additional \$250,000 in the city budget and the number of jobs available for youth grew from 1000 to 3000. A standing committee of government, business, and Common Ground leaders has been formed to manage this program moving forward. How cool is that??

The focus on the **affordable housing** campaign in Ozaukee County is still underway. We are endeavoring

to develop four homes with Habitat for Humanity in Cedarburg. The hard work that Common Ground members are doing will have a measurable impact on middle class families in the county.



Other research committees are studying the issues of immigration, education, and mental health.

Do you want to be active in strengthening our community? If you are interested in learning about or getting involved in these campaigns, please contact a member of St. James' core team: Kris Ochocki, Beth Taylor, Linda Steiger, Robert Wilson, and Dorota Pruski. Also, check out www.commongroundwi.org or the Sunday bulletin for upcoming Common Ground events!

Robert Wilson and
Dorota Pruski

CALLING ALL WRITERS, ALL MUSICIANS AND ALL TEACHERS!

Writers: Do you have a story, a meditation, a poem, or an experience to share that you'd like to contribute to the St. James' Epistle? At present the articles in the newsletter are written by members of the vestry, but there must be writers in the pews who have something they'd like to say. If you'd be interested in writing for the Epistle, see Gust Olson.

Musicians: Do you have a vocal or instrumental talent that you would like to share during Sunday worship with the people of St. James'? Or join the Joyful Noise music group? With the music program taking shape as we move ahead, this would be a perfect time to offer your gifts. If you are interested in this ministry, see Mother Debra or Deacon Terry.

Teachers: Do you love children and have a desire to teach them about Jesus Christ? The number of children in our Sunday School program is growing, and new teachers are going to be needed. If you feel this call to teach and grow along with the children, see Mother Debra or Kris Ochocki.

MEET SUSAN NUSSER, MICHAEL BRUNELLE AND GENEVA AND ANTONÍA

It really came as no surprise when Susan Nusser declared that she likes change. In an hour or two of conversation about their histories, Susan and her husband, Michael Brunelle, spanned at least five states and ten careers between the two of them. But now those moves and shifts have landed Susan and Michael in Milwaukee, a location they plan on maintaining for awhile, and this setting provides a backdrop for their penchant for change and the consistency that accompanies longer-term commitment to a community.

One of the mainstays in Susan's life is her passion for writing, and this has, ironically, prompted a lot of changes as she explored different subjects and mediums. From Julia Child's kitchen to thoroughbred Olympic horseracing barns, from AIDS work to private investigation, Susan covers a lot of territory—but writing is always the impetus. A published author of numerous magazine articles and a non-fiction book entitled *In Service to the Horse*, Susan focuses on "telling stories." She loves writing non-fiction as it feeds her curiosity by allowing her "to go places most people can't normally experience." If she wonders what's on the other side of the door at the zoo marked "Employees Only," she pitches a story about what goes on behind the scenes at the zoo and creates an opportunity to open that door. Currently in the midst of writing her second book, Susan has already chosen a subject for her third full-length work. Like many artists, Susan works another "day job" and it is one that actually allows her to share her passion for the written word: she is an Assistant Professor and the Director of the Writing Center at Carroll University.

Michael shares Susan's fervor for self-expression and multiple professions, but in different mediums and specialties. With degrees in film theory, history, mass communications, and library science and archiving, Michael's artistic endeavors lean toward the visual over the verbal. A self-taught artist, he exhibited his work via an artist's cooperative during their years in Boston. In Milwaukee, he plans to combine his various areas of expertise to further his primary passion: community building. Michael hopes to use his undergrad knowledge of film and his graduate work in library science "to serve and do good," perhaps by preserving the history of an underserved culture or com-

munity through audio or video archiving.

Michael and Susan share another passion: their hope to contribute to their adopted hometown through relationship building. They appreciate Milwaukee—the "cool cultural stuff" it has to offer, the diversity their daughters get to experience here that wasn't a part of their own childhood experiences, and the professional opportunities unavailable in Vermont, their former home. As a result and because of their plans to live here long-term, the couple wants to build community relationships, helping to make Milwaukee more "inclusive, tolerant, and loving."

The value of inclusion is one of the traits that Michael appreciates about St. James'. He remembers leaving the Catholic church because he couldn't "hack not being able to take my politics to church." Later the family had a positive experience joining an Episcopal church in Vermont, and upon moving here, found St. James' to be the "best Episcopal church in the city." Michael continues to appreciate a faith tradition that "leaves room for struggle and questioning"; Susan likes St. James' as a church of change as opposed to other churches that attempt to be "comfortable." She ascribes to the view of Jesus as a social radical and goes to church to ask "What does it mean to be a Christian, and what can I do better?" The St. James' clergy, mission, and diversity meet their needs for both change and community.

With parents as thoughtful, creative, and intentional as Michael and Susan, it's not surprising that their daughters, Geneva and Antonía, are showing every sign of being artistic, independent thinkers themselves. Four-year-old Geneva reports that her favorite activity is coloring her art projects, most of which focus on princesses or fish. She lists "learning stuff at the children's museum," eating fish sticks and peas, playing with her sister, and the colors green and pink as her other favorites. Speaking on behalf of her younger sister Antonía, Geneva informs us that Antonía likes playing with her big sister, giving hugs, chasing the cats, eating mac and cheese and using the Gordon Park slide.

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A GENERAL CONVENTION “MEMOIR”

While I was attending the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, in July in Anaheim, I kept a log of things to share about the activities there. From the floor presentations by deputies in Mickey Mouse ears to the worship experiences and the really cool parliamentary processes, hearings and committee meetings. But all of those observations seem to have gone AWOL and have disappeared from my computer.

I won't attempt to describe legislation passed and the work of the convention. (If you want to know more, please talk to me at fellowship.) What is more important to me to tell is how in all things, and at all times, it was the people of St. James', the witnesses to God's love of the people of this parish who drove me. I wore you on my lapel in the form of a small St. James' pin, but I tried so much more to carry you on my lips and into the hearts of many others over those days.

I tried to sit with people from other dioceses for many meals and at daily Eucharist. Often I was those whose views were strikingly close to mine and whose experiences in-

cluded the sort of lived witness I see in St. James'. This sharing was affirming and energizing. With others, as we talked about the work before us (especially about the challenging issues), we were not in agreement. In these conversations, I found that God had brought me to share with representatives of the more conservative dioceses in our church. Our conversations never had the hostile or negative tones that seemed to have characterized previous conventions. We were able to share our experiences, over meals, a closing hymn, or even sitting in the hotel laundry room watching clothes tumble and enjoying a glass of wine. (Who says one can't enjoy laundry.)

I found that some of these folks talk about what God intended for humanity without looking around them at what He does in reality; who talk about “care for the other” as an academic subject, not an opportunity for outreach to real people with real problems; who talk about some action of the church not being “our job” or “our mission” without being able to say what they thought their mission was or how to live it; who look at giving as a way

to increase tax deductions and not as a way of living; or who talked about “families” as though there was one standard definition, a pattern that determined a family

So I was given many opportunities to offer all of you to the greater community of the church. I shared how love looks when you open your eyes to see it in all people; how hospitality looks when you open your arms in welcome; how mission can give life to ministries when the community knows and owns the mission. I could share that love is what defines families, not gender. I could share you.

My General Convention experience is one I will treasure. I hope (REALLY hope) that I will be re-elected to go again. Many wonderful things happened at this convention and even more of import will happen at the next. Think of the wonderful things I will be able to share about St. James' three years from now in Indianapolis as we as a parish community go forward living witness to God's love.

John Washbush



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Parental faves include Jaws, acid folk music, the south of Spain, gardening, esoteric films not many people have seen... the varied list goes on and on. Unfortunately, within the confines of an Epistle article, we can't cover everything. In fact, we've only touched on three states and a mere handful of careers; you'll have to catch Susan, Michael, Geneva, and Antonia in person on Sunday for the rest of the stories.

Susan Wilson

STUMP THE PRIEST

Dear priest,

Why is the *Book of Common Prayer* called the *Book of Common Prayer*? Signed, Wanting to know

Dear Wanting,

The *Book of Common Prayer* is called that because the church prays *in common* from the same prayer book. We don't change our worship service every week. And, every Episcopal church uses the same book as the basis of its worship service. That is, we pray *in common* using this same prayer book. Hence, the name. It is *not* called the common book of prayer (a frequent mistake). There is nothing common at all about this book. It is amazing book with beautiful prayers, different worship services (from Morning and Evening Prayer, to the Holy Eucharist, to Ordinations), a Catechism, the Psalms and even some historical documents. And, no matter what Episcopal Church you attend in any diocese across the country, you will find that they use the *Book of Common Prayer* as the basis for their worship. Signed, the priest

BUILDING AND MUSIC UPDATE

We continue to look at creative uses for our building. This summer we completed a property survey. Currently, we are in discussion with Heartland Homes (a subsidiary of the Heartland Alliance based in Chicago, Illinois), exploring the possibility of using some of our property for affordable housing for the elderly. In the next few weeks Heartland will be developing a critical path flowchart (like a time line) that will offer us a bit more definition for what next steps would look like if we decide to do this. Given their resource capacity, there would be no rapid movement from Heartland Homes, but they are very interested in our site. They have recently received funding from the state to do a project on Fond du Lac Ave. which will necessitate the bulk of their focus in Wisconsin at least until the first of the year.

It remains clear that we can't continue to move forward with life as usual with our building. We have more building than we need; more building than we can reasonably heat, insure and maintain. The vestry is excited about possible new uses for our property that are consistent with our mission statement and that might get us out from under the costs of high utilities, maintenance and insurance.

We will be discussing the building in Listening Sessions soon to be scheduled in the fall and an all-parish meeting that we will schedule to keep the information flowing as we have more forthcoming from Heartland Homes. Please don't hesitate to ask questions of Mother Debra or members of the vestry if you have questions about the building.

On a related note, the Music Committee continues to meet to talk about how we will re-focus our music program at St. James'. We are exploring all sorts of options and having good discussions. Some people believe that we have made the decision to move to a guitar based music program and this is simply not true. We do not know yet what role different instruments will have in our music program nor if we will seek to form a new choir. Right now, all options are on the table and will remain on the table until decisions are made. The Music Committee is working hard to give Mother Debra the best information and advice available from which to make those decisions.