



the Gospel

According to St. Mark's **March, 2008**



Changes and Challenges

By Louise Walsh, Senior Warden

The joyful tribute to Dee Hahn-Rollins on February 23 led several parishioners to tell me how well they think we celebrate the final departure of members of our community. That Dee's lifetime of outreach was felt not only at St. Mark's but around the world was testified to by the many people who spoke of her life and work.

Dee's global persona fit naturally with the in-reach/out-reach pilgrimage that St Mark's launched this year. In fact, Dee helped focus the communal conversations in September that helped the Vestry identify six parish priorities for 2008.

The first priority—to engage others outside St. Mark's and strengthen our engagement within—hit the ground running when the Racial Reconciliation group in February offered to lead Shrine Mont 2008, using the book "Radical Welcome" as a guide. How often does a Senior Warden find people asking to lead the annual meeting! Lots more events are coming, and a formal charter and budget with help from the Parish Life and Outreach pillars are in the pipeline.

The 2008 Canvass, so ably led by Josie Jordan, exceeded \$880,000 in pledges on February 25, with more than 30 households outstanding. I have asked several parishioners to explore with me "the culture of giving" at St. Mark's.

Sadly, an outstanding priest did not accept the No. 2 slot. The Search Committee has worked wonders and is moving on, hoping to hire an associate rector before Paul goes on vacation in August. A part-time, interim assistant clergy person will shortly be hired. I long for a larger conversation on clergy compensation and our capacity for giving. How should the church of the Holy Activity compensate Paul Abernathy and assisting clergy for all they do? Our former rector, Jim Adams, said when he left that compensation was his biggest regret: "I never got a raise that I didn't ask for."

A joyful note: This is a dream time to be at St. Mark's. The palate is colorful, the plate is full, the priest is awesome, the

pillars are (mostly) thriving, and the parish is lively. We grow in racial and ethnic diversity. We burst with babies, and Sian Jones, our youth director, continues her awesome work to ensure sustainable youth programs.

I look forward to serving you for another year as Senior Warden.



Reminder: Annual Meeting
Sunday, March 30

One service at 10 am followed by
The annual Parish meeting

No Sunday School,
but activities for children will be provided
and the Nursery will be open.



2 Reflection

March, 2008

by Ellen Frost

When I joined St. Mark's 25 years ago, like all newcomers I promised "to share complaints and praise with appropriate persons." I hope that my steady attendance and stewardship as lay server, beadle, reader, and member of the choir testify to my appreciation of what St. Mark's has to offer. Many people have said to me, "If it weren't for St. Mark's, I wouldn't be in church at all." I was in that category once.

The St. Mark's community is vibrant and caring, but it is also human. I would like to share three observations that reflect that humanness -- mine personally and ours as a community. I have aired them to various individuals and now wish to share them more broadly.

1. *Our community's self-image.* When we stay at our house in Vermont, Bill and I attend a tiny Episcopal church. Attendance in the winter sometimes drops to 12 or fewer. Several members are quite elderly. The people in this church help and support each other, engage in outreach, teach children, and do almost everything that the people at St. Mark's do. Yet it never occurs to them that they are a particularly wonderful or unique community, or indeed that they are at all special. They are just trying to be good Christians. Nor do they talk much about their own spiritual lives, except at monthly discussions specifically devoted to the

sharing of spiritual experience.

Could we learn from them? I suggest that we cut way back on our seemingly constant stream of self-congratulation and self-celebration, at least during church services. There are simply too many people doing too many good things to acknowledge them all in separate ceremonies. Besides, aren't we all supposed to try to do what Jesus tells us to do, without asking for public support and praise?

2. *Attitudes toward others.* Everyone at St. Mark's is a liberal Democrat, right? Wrong. Not only are moderate and conservative Democrats faithful parishioners, but also (gasp) Republicans. Moreover, some of us privately object to a tendency to confuse Christian conservatives, evangelists, and fundamentalists and to accuse them all of hostility to gay people. We seem to have no trouble respecting Buddhists, Muslims, and Jews, but Christians who disagree strongly with us? That is much more difficult, it seems.

Two recent steps in the right direction are the course exploring the full range of Bishop Akinola's life and thought and Paul's sermon on February 17 extolling "dialogue" (literally, "through words") within the worldwide Anglican church rather than mere "discussion" (from "apart" plus "shaking" or "breaking"). Without compromising what we most deeply believe in, let's do what we can, individually and as a community, to ensure that dialogue and humility prevail over schism and self-righteousness.

3. *Announcements.* Announcements have gotten out of control -- again. They seriously disrupt the flow of the 11:15 service. Enough said.

Resolutions Passed at the February 19, 2008 Vestry Meeting:

Christian Ed Co-Directors for 2008-2010:

The Vestry approved the following parishioners to serve as Christian Education Co-directors for 2008-2010: Brock Hansen, Nadine Hathaway, Don Lipscomb, and Heather Powers.

Vestry says Thank You

- The Vestry wishes to acknowledge and publicly thank the Search Committee co-chairs, Scilla Adams and Jim Brooks, for their outstanding leadership of the Search process for assisting clergy. The finest possible candidates were carefully presented to the rector in the shortest possible time by the full Search Committee. The Vestry has every confidence that a

process has been established so that the Search Committee may complete its work in a reasonable time. The Vestry also wishes to publicly express its gratitude to these additional members of the Search Committee: Jack Burton, Scott Kubista-Hovis, Cecelia Monahan, and Kathryn Redmond.

- The Vestry wishes to acknowledge and publicly thank Pete Carlson for his outstanding service to St. Mark's as its Treasurer for three years and Acting Treasurer for this past year. His energy and competence enabled the Vestry to address financial challenges thoughtfully, his clear budget explanations and mastery of parish finances helped parish leaders make sound financial decisions, and his willingness to help parishioners understand parish finances never flagged.



Fifty Years at St. Mark's: Three Parishioners Share Their Memories

Jan Hoffman

How well I remember coming to St. Mark's that fall day in 1957, walking into the beautiful nave, which then had pews and that long center aisle. Here are some of my memories of our life together:

*That terribly sad Sunday after President John Kennedy was assassinated and President Lyndon Johnson came to church along with many secret servicemen. There were men with rifles on the roofs of all the neighboring buildings too.

*The time when, as a group, we walked to the Lincoln Memorial to hear Martin Luther King deliver his famous speech – "I Have a Dream."

*Walking each week with clergy carrying the cross onto the Capitol grounds to read prayers.

*Saving St. Mark's when the Library of Congress wanted our land for another building.

*The blessing of being in church with my friend, the prophetic Verna Dozier, from the time I first came until her death in 2006.

What a loving and supportive community this is and has been and will continue to be. What proof I have had of this since I was recently housebound for so long. My gratitude for your love is overwhelming. And the fifty year celebration on Sunday, January 28, brought it all to a climax. Thank you all for your great gifts and support and compassion and faith. My own faith is stronger because of all of you and I count it a real blessing to be in this community. May our faith deepen so that we continue to find God in all the complexities of life. It's been a memorable fifty years!

Lilly R. March

What brought me to St. Mark's fifty years ago? It's a question I am often asked. The answer surprises – a job, in reality, a training program. Bill Baxter had been the rector for a year. His vision included a woman to direct Christian Education programs. By a series of coincidences he and I met, explored ideas and, after meeting with the vestry, we began what proved to be an exciting, often difficult, often rewarding project. Over seven years we continued, laying the groundwork for programs which still continue.

So the next question was: what kept me here? The most important factor was that I had found a community, a faith community. St. Mark's is a place where I have experienced joy. It is a place where I have learned and grown. It is a place

where I have grieved and been comforted. The emotions that fill my life – and all of our lives – are explored rather than hidden. And we can live and laugh and cry and hug and not be alone. Perhaps that is what has made it for me not "just a church" but a community of the faithful, of which I am one.

Being honored and presented with gifts for these many years is unbelievable. I thank you, one and all, for the love which surrounded and blessed me on that Sunday morning. Another fifty years would be all right – for these years of life at St. Mark's mean too much to me to do anything other than to continue living faithfully among you, a community that I love.

Elizabeth Long

I came to St. Mark's in 1952 with my godmother, Mildred Kirscher. She said I needed structure, religion and a safe place to be. Back then women wore dresses, hats and white gloves and men wore suits, even in the summer. We had no air-conditioning and, yes, it got hot. We still had pews and, I must say, they kind of got hard on one's seat after a while; we even got splinters. Folks would genuflect when they came into church. The service was long, especially with communion on the first Sunday of the month.

I was in the children's choir (where I met Lilly March) and, later, the Junior choir. WE got into trouble for making noise or talking during the service; Rector Bill Baxter would get upset. So we learned sigh language and continued. We played in the Parish Hall which, at that time, had wooden floors and a stage with curtains. We used to hide behind the curtains and listen to adults' footsteps as they walked across the floor and then guess who it was. We had the sound of Lilly's down. As teens, we had Sunday school at Sherrill's Bakery on Pennsylvania Avenue, went bowling and roller skating (sometimes even in the parish Hall) and had hay rides in the back of a dump truck.

Lilly got me going to church summer camp, Strawderman (for juniors), where I learned to ride horses English style and ShrineMont (for seniors). I liked it so much that for many years I was a counselor at both places.

To you, Lilly, who helped me through so many tough times growing up, I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. You did so much for me.



Junior Warden

By Jim Michael

April 15, 2007. It is a dark and stormy day. The in-coming Junior Warden is making a speech at the annual meeting. A rainstorm breaks out. A large leak erupts in the roof. The out-going Junior Warden Charley Donnelly grabs a mop and appears visibly relieved his term is over. Jim Michael, the in-coming Junior Warden, identifies his first repair. And so it goes!

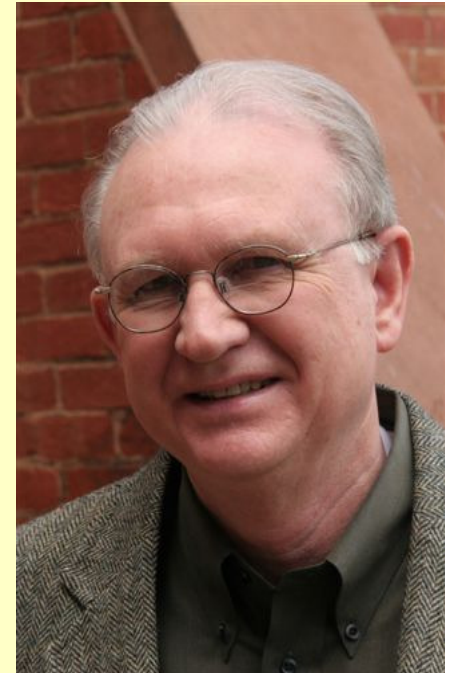
My first term has not been boring. Our continuing need is to do the best we can to maintain our beautiful, historic building. My goal has been to set and meet priorities – balancing needs with wants – with the funds we have.

One of the Vestry's "things we ought to do" is to make improvements to our buildings and kitchen. We have done both. We have either started or continued service contracts for heating and air-conditioning, automatic fire protection, and wet pipe sprinkler systems, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, pest control, and waste disposal. We worked with the Kitchen Cabinet to service the stoves and hoods, replace the refrigerator, add a freezer, replace the commercial disposal, rebuild the commercial faucet, and replace the commercial dishwasher. We have made significant repairs to our early 1990's heating and air-conditioning systems and leaking Baxter House radiators (also requiring Gregory Room repairs and repainting). We also completed the five year update of former Junior Warden Jane Rutherford's "Repair and Replacement Reserve Report" that led to the "Building Replacement Reserve" budget account for our aging facilities. The update recommended an increase, unfortunately not possible in the current budget.

One of my personal goals has been to eliminate safety hazards and make us more secure. We added stone to the parking area to eliminate step downs, patched the broken Nave terrazzo, changed the keypad code, added security locks to the church, rekeyed security locks on Baxter House, and rebuilt some exit door hardware. We are completing a fire and life safety study to ensure we are as safe as we can be.

Included were wants for a 3rd Street Garden irrigation system and hose bibs for the Garden Committee, and (by the annual meeting?) new carpeting for the platforms in the Nave. Also, the columbarium construction is complete, and attention can now be paid to upgrading the room.

In the coming year I hope we can focus more on space use. Recently, Louise Walsh and I received feedback from the Pillars for space use that will be analyzed for best planning. I am indebted to our out-going Manciple Charley Donnelly and the Fabric Committee for their individual and collective help. I look forward to attending to our fabric needs as your Junior Warden in the next year.



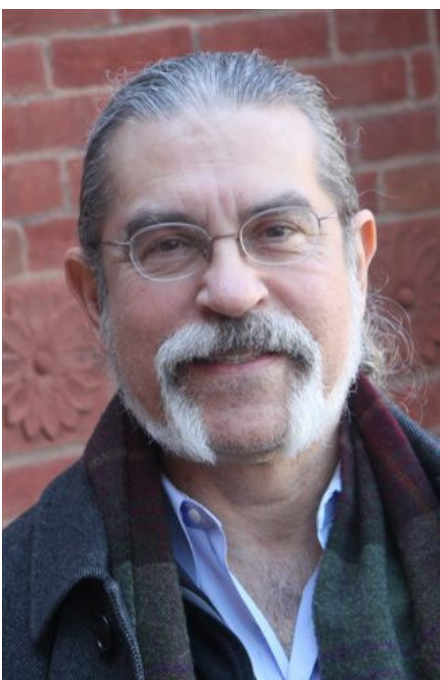
Diocesan Delegate

By Mark Lindley

It feels to me to be a great privilege to be nominated to represent St. Mark's in the Diocese of Washington as a lay delegate. Born in Washington, DC, I have been an Episcopalian since my childhood baptism. I first visited Shrine Mont around 1958 when I attended the church camp sponsored by the Diocese of Washington. I was active in my previous parish, St. Andrew's, College Park, as a vestry member, as senior warden, and as an alternate delegate to the Diocese. Nancy and I have been at St. Mark's for over 10 years. In the Christian Education pillar I have taught Sunday school, co-led a class or two, participated in more classes as a member and attended several Christian Education weekends. I have served on the board of the Players as Treasurer. I've enjoyed providing occasional casseroles for the Soup Kitchen and salad to support the National Farm

Worker Ministry visit. Currently I am active in the men's group, as an advisor to and occasional participant in the Yoga Center, and have participated in the Buddhist Insight Meditation group since it began here more than a year ago.

It is a great time for St. Mark's to continue to grow as a model of leadership and commitment in the Diocese of Washington. There are many opportunities facing the Diocese as it responds to the call from across the nation and, indeed, the world, to stand for justice for all and the infinite worth of each individual both in the church and beyond. It would be my hope to serve St. Mark's and the Diocese in our mutual learning as we step into the leadership challenges.



Vestry Candidate

by Joe Calizo

For most of my life being a first-generation Filipino-American has meant not only facing the challenge of integrating the ethnic customs of my parents into my identity, but also negotiating their Catholicism. Although I was raised Catholic, I can honestly say I never “owned” it. When I felt free to make my own choices about religion, I only attended church when I visited my family. I hungered for a faith experience that resonated with the confusion I felt about God’s relationship with humanity, a hunger that would not be fed until I arrived at St. Mark’s.

My wife, Lee, and I found St. Mark’s in 2003 after a year of “trying on” other churches. Since then, St. Mark’s has been a place that has deeply influenced the way I understand myself, and my relationships. It has not been infrequent, during a sermon, or a Christian Education class I have taken or have taught, that I hear words, which articulate part of my story in a way that has always eluded me. It is the power of these moments that compel me to be engaged in and to serve this community.

My desire to serve on the Vestry is grounded in the gift that St. Mark’s has given to me, namely the ability, in the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke, “to live the questions now.” I believe our church is attracting new members, who also are trying to live the questions of their complex and busy lives, but is St. Mark’s providing the necessary structures and support systems for their exploration? This is just one of the issues that I hope to address through collaboration with my vestry colleagues. I believe through the leadership roles I have taken on teaching Sunday School for two years, being a youth group leader, and serving on Mike Townsend’s Senior Warden Advisory Committee, I am ready for the challenges facing the future of our faith community as a member of the Vestry. I appreciate your consideration and hope I can count on your vote at the annual meeting.



Vestry Candidate

by Mary Lee Watts

My husband and I first visited St. Marks approximately six years ago; it was the first church we visited together and we knew almost immediately that it was where we wanted to be. With our wedding, followed by Reed’s departure for graduate studies in London and an illness in my family, it took us a little bit of time before becoming members. Yet, once making the decision to pledge, I have given as much time as I have money, and in the process come to the realization that I want to help shape our community’s approach to not only its own internal well-being, but also its engagement with the broader world around us.

As a registered dietitian involved with nutrition policy on a daily basis, and believing in the importance of our community’s outreach efforts, I have been involved with St. Marks’ efforts to feed the hungry among us, serving as co-manager of the soup kitchen since 2003. I have also been a part of our efforts to care for one another within the St. Marks’ community through the Caregivers. Currently, I am teaching the 4th and 5th grade Sunday school class. Each of these roles has provided an opportunity for my circle of friends and colleagues at St. Marks to grow, while allowing me to gain insight into our collective goals and the means through which we strive toward them.

I know intimately the power our community has in supporting those in need. Since first coming to St. Marks, it has on more than one occasion served as an anchor of care and love for which I will always be grateful. When my husband was serving with the State Dept. in Iraq three years ago, I found that I looked forward to Sunday morning services, where the weight of my anxiety was lifted with prayer, smiles, and hugs of support. More directly, emergency surgery this past fall found me on the receiving end of St. Marks’ caregivers, which was invaluable to both my emotional and physical recovery. St. Marks is truly a unique community and I would be honored to serve on the vestry, as we continue our journey together, supporting one another, and sharing our abundance with those who seek their place with us.



Vestry Candidate

by *Susan Thompson Hoffman*

My decision to run for the Vestry has come after considerable, humbling thought. I have been a member of St. Mark's Church for almost 30 years, and, over that time, this community has become family to me. I see us loving our own fiercely, while struggling to love "the other" as our own. We celebrate each other's successes and mourn our losses. We anticipate the birth of our children and watch them grow, marveling at their gifts. We pray and eat together. We honor members of all ages, marital, racial and ethnic statuses, and sexual orientations, and we work to understand each other's differences. When we miss the mark, we try to face into ourselves and each other and then work to forgive and change.

Discovering and supporting what knits us together is one of several critical issues I'd like to address on the Vestry. I met my husband at St. Mark's, and my daughter, Savannah, was baptized here. My husband and I divorced and I was fed by the caring support of friends, many of whom I met in Christian Education classes. I gave back to the church, teaching in Catechesis classes and the adult Christian Education program, and serving as Christian Education Conference Coordinator. I coordinated Care Giving efforts for several parishioners, served on the Woman-to-Woman board, and am currently a member of Helen White's Seminarian Advisory Committee. I became a member of St. Mark's groups, formed outside of church. All these activities nurtured in me a sense of belonging and a great love for this place.

Through the Vestry, I'd like to support Sian in her work with our children; take a fresh look at our adult Christian Education program to examine its role in welcoming newcomers and connecting us with each other; and implement Paul's charge to engage in significant outreach by formulating a targeted plan, with action steps and timelines.

My key qualifications for the Vestry are:

- A conscious commitment to spiritual growth
- An ability to listen for what's needed and implement solutions
- A strong work ethic
- 25 years of organizational experience (strategic planning, performance management, budgeting)
- A lifetime dedicated to education (teaching at the elementary, secondary and university levels, training teachers, and developing education programs and policies)

I would now like to join the company of others on the Vestry in running the household of St. Mark's, working to ensure that this will be a spiritual home for you, the friends you bring into our house, and your children and the many others who



will share this space with us in the years to come. I hope you will join me in helping to meet this agenda.

The Wiz Eases on Down to St. Mark's

by *Kristen Hartke*

For the spring show of its 25th season, the St. Mark's Players is bringing the magic of "The Wiz" to our nave. This modern take on "The Wizard of Oz" is being produced with a multicultural emphasis which Jerry Dale, president of the Players, sees as a complement to the Parish goals which highlight both the arts and an examination of issues relating to race. "Theater can open up a lot of avenues for discussion," says Mr. Dale.

Three members of the St. Mark's Boys and Girls Choir have been cast as Munchkins: Chase Ammon, Maddie Hartke-Weber and Emma Herman. Maddie is particularly excited because she is interested in attending Duke Ellington High School for the Arts and feels the production will strengthen her application. Leslie Allen, Chase's mother is thrilled too. "Performing is so good for children's sense of themselves and self-confidence, but performing in the nave of our church, for and with so many members of the St. Mark's community, provides so much more," she says.

St. Mark's parishioner and Players artistic director Rick Hayes is directing "The Wiz," Christine Farrell, who is also co-chair of the Outreach committee, is stage manager. Performances will run for three weekends beginning May 9th, so ease on down!



The Laying on of Hands – What Is It All About?

by Peter Hawley

On the first and third Sundays of each month, Paul or other clergy announce that during communion members of the Care Givers Group will administer the laying on of hands at the high altar. Many members of St. Mark's may not be familiar with this tradition. This article seeks to demystify the practice.

An age-old tradition -- The practice of laying one's hands on another is rooted in the ministry of Jesus. Such person-to-person healing through prayer is also at the core of Christ's great commission to the Apostles and all who follow him. Nor was this charge given only to priests; it is a ministry of the laity as well: "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray...Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him..." (James 5:13-14)

The process – One of St. Mark's strengths is that it offers many ways for parishioners to explore spirituality. The laying on of hands is one of those ways. It has been offered since the 1970's when Jim Adams and Lilly March asked members of her *Art of Pastoral Care* course to provide this ministry. Over the years parishioners with backgrounds such as social work and hospice care have joined the group. Skilled in "being present" for others, they also understand the importance of confidentiality, which is essential for this practice.

Because the laying on of hands is administered at the altar rail behind the choir, it is a private devotion. The supplicant simply kneels or stands in front of the lay server and states the matter about which he or she wishes to pray. The lay server then places both hands on the individual's head or shoulders and offers a prayer, incorporating what the person has asked for and invoking the healing power of God. The following prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer* (page

456) is used: "I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love." Following the prayer, the lay server never mentions the subject again, even when encountering the supplicant in private.

Why do we do this? – A sample of lay server responses: "It is not about us as healers. We are simply conduits. I also like the fact that we are reclaiming this ancient Christian tradition." (Gene Kendall) "I think of myself as a skeptic, yet I have found this very meaningful." (Eleanor Whitman) "I have experienced its power for myself and feel a deep mutuality in it: I believe God's healing love flows through both of us." (Suella Henn)

For more information – On February 5, 2006, the Rev. Shearon Williams preached about the theological basis of the laying on of hands and spoke movingly of her own experience in receiving it (www.stmarks.net/worship/sermons.html). Current lay servers would also be glad to discuss the practice with you: Lilly March, Beth Mahood Andrews, John Barton, Suella Henn, Gene Kendall, Barbara Nelson, Meg Athey Press, Bobbi Smith, Eleanor Whitman, and Arnold Winkelman.



March , 2008

Vestry Passes 2008 Budget

by **Pete Carlson, Immediate Past Treasurer**

The Vestry approved the church budget for 2008 at its January meeting, significantly increasing spending for church activities. Expenses for 2008 rose 10 percent above 2007 expenses, largely attributable to rising personnel-related costs (18 percent increase) and the cost of maintaining our 10 percent tithe to the Diocese (16 percent increase).

Despite a well-run Canvass, fewer households pledged in 2008 than in 2007. At the conclusion of the canvass, 392 households had pledged a total of \$880,000 for 2008. We lost 54 households from the 423 households pledging at the end of 2007, while adding 23 new households.

The Vestry was able to meet the increased expenses in the 2008 budget by drawing on reserves that had been set aside to pay for Keith's sabbatical and the Diocesan assessment, and by carrying over unspent funds from 2007 (savings in personnel costs due to Shearon's departure). The Vestry also went through the budget with a fine-toothed comb, making adjustments based on actual spending levels in previous years, and culling out or cutting back any expenses that do not contribute directly to the growth and vitality of the parish.

As a result of these actions, the Vestry was able to fund its highest budget priorities for 2008. Those priorities include hiring a new assistant or associate rector, replacing Keith during his sabbatical, funding maintenance and service agreements for our buildings, restoring full funding to the Christian Education program, expanding our youth and family ministry, and providing a bonus to Paul for holding down the fort on his own for most of last year. Funding for building improvements and for new outreach initiatives, which are also Vestry priorities for 2008, is available from Endowment funds.

If you would like to submit an article or photo to the Gospel or have suggestions, please contact Stephanie Deutsch, 202-547-8624 or scd@his.com .

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