



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK'S

A spiritual community in which we are gathered to celebrate the gifts of God that empower us to engage boldly in the struggles of life, to care for each other, and to serve Christ where we live and work.

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D.C.

APRIL 2002

2002 Annual Meeting

By Greg Niblett

The St. Mark's 2002 Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, April 19th. Please note that this date is a departure from our usual meeting date of the first Friday after Easter.

The annual meeting is where the parish elects new leadership for the coming year, thanks those who have served, and enjoys one another's company during a reception and dinner. In order to vote at the annual meeting, you must be a pledging member of St. Mark's in 2002.

The following candidates are running for office:

Senior Warden (elect 1):

George Meng

Junior Warden (elect 1):

Jane Rutherford

Vestry (elect 3):

David Dill

Dick Rumpf

Nancy Van Scoyoc

In addition to the election of vestry members there will be an important vote to make some changes to our by-laws. There will also be an important update on our church finances. We encourage you to come.

A reception/cocktail hour will begin at 5:30 p.m.; dinner at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting itself will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. Registration for voting will take place from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. and will remain open after 7:00 p.m. for late-comers. The cost is \$7 for dinner and babysitting will be available starting at 5:30. The nominating committee would like to thank all those who are running for office. It takes courage to offer your skills, gifts, and heart to your community . . . and it is sincerely appreciated.

J A F T (JUST A FEW THOUGHTS) ABOUT COMMUNICATION

BY REVEREND PAUL R. ABERNATHY

This issue of *The Gospel* is devoted to the subject of communication. As I think about it, the word community immediately comes to my mind. Even more, it strikes me as no surprise that these words, *community* and *communication*, come from the same root. Community: a unified body of people who share common ideals. Communication: an act of sharing a common body of ideas and information. The former portends the latter. To paraphrase the biblical verse: *Wherever two or three are gathered in community, there will be communication between and among them.*

Now, the very fact that we are talking about communication, I suppose, can indicate a problem. In my experience with many groups and organizations over many years, I can recall many conversations about communication. As I reflect, usually the occasion of these conversations has been some awareness that the communication had not been sufficient or efficient. Important news consistently had not traveled far and fast enough. People who should have been told and, therefore, should have known were not told and, therefore, did not know. Such

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

A Favorite Topic:

Communication

Exploring the different ways we communicate at St. Mark's...



Candidate Essays

Find out why our candidates want to take on these demanding & rewarding roles here at St. Mark's



Our Seminarists

Conversations with Katherine Bush & Glenda McQueen



Vestry Mouse Report

Get to know our new Vestry Mouse & what vestry meetings are all about

... and much more!

Candidates for Sr. and Jr. Warden

BY GEORGE MENG, SENIOR WARDEN

At first, I thought it odd to ask for your vote. After all, there is no opposition. But I really do want your vote.

Last year, in running for Senior Warden, I identified two areas that needed attention: structure and communication. We've taken great strides in both areas. But we have a lot more to do.

I believe that our financial stress of the past few months was a symptom of our need for continued attention to both areas. I remember how things were when I was on the Vestry from 1985-88 and thereafter running canvasses. There is no comparison between the St. Mark's of that time and now.

Although the number of members we have now is essentially the same as it was then, we have much more going on -- in both quantity and variety. We all have far more on our plates now than we did then. I think the variety is the result of a different view of what St. Mark's is or should be and whom we serve. We have responded to these changes. We've added staff, changed procedures, and tried to embrace technology. But I think we've also stumbled a few times. The stumbles always give us a choice to learn something. The last one with the budget made it clear that we needed to make significant changes with our financial operations. Oh, we knew before that we had to make changes. We just didn't know it was so urgent.

One of the choices with which we've grappled as a community for a long time is whether or not we will be larger in numbers. I believe that some but not all of us decided over 10 years ago that we needed to be a larger community. We operated based upon that decision. Most importantly, we hired the people needed. Last year, we found ourselves fully staffed but short of money. Our choices boiled down to retreating from our plan of the past decade by cutting staff or continuing on our planned path. **STOP.** Did you think the town meetings of January 27, 2002 were presented as the second choice -- by raising more money? That was simply a short-term fix. You don't think for one moment that the cost of running St. Mark's is going to decrease in 2003, do you?

The community made its choice loud and clear during the town meetings -- to continue on the planned path. Following up on that mandate, the Vestry passed a seven-point resolution on February 2, 2002. The fifth point bears particular attention: "The Vestry will, by its meeting of March 17, 2002, establish a specific goal for growth at St. Mark's." But don't be lulled into thinking that your participation won't be needed. The welcoming of new people is everyone's responsibility. I have a deep and abiding appreciation for our Christian Education Program and our rite of passage, the LCF Class. But we must find additional ways to bring people deeply into our community life. We are going to have to make St. Mark's more relevant and easy for families with children. And we're all going to have to be involved if we want to keep on the path we have chosen.

Simply put, we're still in the middle of the reinvention of St. Mark's.

I ask again for your vote. For me it will be a confirmation of your choice to continue with me on this path. ☩

BY JANE RUTHERFORD, JUNIOR WARDEN

The term of office for the positions of Junior and Senior Warden is one year. Although most wardens do succeed themselves for an allowable second year, there is significance in my decision to continue and I ask for your vote and your support.

We are challenged to balance and support the needs of our personnel, programs, and physical structure. While this is nothing new, what is decidedly differently is that we have more personnel, more programs, and more demands on our physical structure than ever before. It has been a unique year; this we can surely say. The events of September 11th tore at us in ways that we are still struggling to comprehend and reconcile. In the midst of unfamiliar fears and anxieties, we have come together for worship and solace, continued our work together, and in our valued tradition, asked questions of ourselves, including ones of community values and symbolism.

I would like to thank those of you who have given time, physical strength, and humor to the mundane tasks of cleaning, organizing, and painting. Thanks also to those who have made contributions of their time and talent in facilitating meetings and retreats, serving on my advisory committee, and to those who have simply made themselves available to me. Finally, I want to acknowledge the hard work of our Manciple, John Sedgewick, and to recognize the efforts and support of the Endowment Committee, chaired by Jim Meek and Betty Foster.

I ask for your support in several ways. I will continue to need your time and talent as well as your suggestions. Please be willing to undertake limited-scope, short-term projects such as spearheading the scraping, cleaning, and painting of our iron fence. Finally, remember to give the necessary attention to the simple and practical things we often overlook - lock the doors, don't lose your keys, turn off the lights, keep the refrigerator clean, manage your trash!

Thank you for your vote, your participation, and your presence! ☩



Candidates for The Vestry

BY DAVID DILL

Early in 1997, I was looking around in the Cathedral bookstore and got ahold of Jim Adams' book, *So You Think You're Not Religious - A Thinking Person's Guide to the Church*. My wife, Mary Alex, and I were looking for a church and had been to a few that didn't do much for us. We decided to take the ultimate risk and actually physically go to St. Mark's. Of course, we chose a Sunday that would give us a real sense of what the church was all about - Easter. Jim Adams was already gone by then, and we've never met him. It was Jim Steen popping champagne corks that told us we had found the right place.

We ducked in and out, successfully escaping detection for a couple of years - by everyone except Tom Strange of course, who threw a net over us one Sunday and walked us to the welcome table. We started coming to church regularly in the Fall of 2000 and have slowly become more involved.

This church is the most progressive collection of thinkers that I have ever been in contact with. I am continually amazed by the ability of the members of this church to talk directly and authentically to one another. I have recently been a part of the racism class, and once again this honesty is proven to me. This is a searching place that is not afraid to ask hard questions. "Am I a racist?" Many churches wouldn't touch that one with a ten foot pole. But here, it is OK. Not only OK...the point.

I am excited to be considered to serve on your vestry and if elected, I will need your help. I want to ask you the hard questions about where St. Mark's goes from here. ✚

BY DICK RUMPF

Some of you know me as that salt-and-pepper-headed guy who frequently lay serves at the 9:00 service. Others may recognize me as a member of the adult acolyte corps at the 11:00 service, but most of the congregation knows me as stepfather to Anna, father to Lee and Christine, and husband of Nora. Nora and I were married at St. Mark's nearly 15 years ago and our children were baptized here.

I love St. Mark's - the people, the beautiful building, the fun, the diversity, and the current clergy. I was a Missouri Synod Lutheran and Nora was a Catholic, and now we find that St. Mark's provides a perfect solution to our spiritual needs.

Professionally, I spent 10 years on the staff and faculty of the Applied Physics Lab of Johns Hopkins University, more than 12 years in the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research and Development, and now 12 years as an independent technical and management consultant working primarily for numerous defense contractors, several Department of Energy labs, and the Navy. The professional opportunities I've had have helped to fashion my skills to be part of and to lead effective working groups, to solve difficult problems, and to help facilitate clear decisions based on all inputs and thorough research. This is all good experience that I would bring to working with fellow members of the vestry and our clergy if you honor me with the opportunity to serve.

I feel that I can now devote the energy and time to be an effective vestry member. About 18 years ago, I was the President of the Georgetown Lutheran Church Council here in Washington when we went through a very emotional period when the parish was divided over issues surrounding our Pastor. This was a wrenching experience, the memory of which has been painful enough to keep me away from church service until now. I am ready to work on church issues again, refreshed and wiser from my experiences (and mistakes) at church, at work, and at home, and from learning from the good examples of others.

I strongly support a solid music program with Keith and Adam at the helm, as I believe that great music is a vital and essential part of worship. Likewise, a strong Christian Education program is essential to give our congregation the tools to cope with the many challenges we all will encounter in life. This education is especially important for our young children. They should know how much Jesus loves them and begin to understand the rituals and their meaning so that they will relate to them as they grow older and not be bored or put off by lack of understanding. Last, but certainly not least, is the need for strong spiritual growth. Paul and Stephanie are clearly, for me, at the core of our spiritual well being. Their own spiritual growth and our support of them is essential to the future health and well being of St. Mark's. ✚

Candidates for The Vestry

BY NANCY VAN SCOYOC

I am announcing my candidacy for Vestry after a great deal of soul searching. Vestry membership requires an awesome commitment of time, energy, patience, and perseverance, and I much admire and appreciate the stalwart souls who serve now and have served in the past.

I am doing this because I find the possibilities here so compelling. St. Mark's holds great promise -- we attract an array of fascinating, talented, hard-working folks looking for community and trying to make sense out of life and, yes, asking the God question. The incredible richness of resources in our people gives us the potential for making a real difference in these troubled and challenging times.

I think that our "four pillars" of the arts, Christian education, outreach, and worship can all be vehicles for expressing our talents and commitment to nurture our souls and each other -- and, at the same time, for making a bold statement to the world about our passionate concern for peace and justice and for making a positive contribution to our larger community.

To live up to our potential requires us to be risk takers. We spend a lot of time talking about being inclusive, desiring diversity, promoting racial reconciliation, and connecting with our community. To do this we must take some bold steps, whether or not we can guarantee the outcomes.

A small band of people from St. Mark's recently spent eight weeks going out to "the Projects" of Capper/Carrollsborg one night a week to teach basic computer skills to low-income women who will soon go off welfare and need to improve their job skills. It was a scary thing to do -- and we didn't do it perfectly. But it was a good beginning at building a bridge across the chasm of race and class. I was struck not only by our volunteers' readiness to plunge into unknown territory, but also by their spirit of cooperation, willingness to learn from mistakes, and capacity for being inspired by their students. These are characteristics I value highly in being part of other group efforts at St. Mark's.

My husband, Gardner, and I discovered St. Mark's in 1989. We were lapsed churchgoers looking for a faith community that would both nurture and challenge us. We found it in spades! At the time, I was just starting a wilderness challenge program with high risk inner-city youth through FLOC (For Love of Children) and many people here at St. Mark's encouraged me and supported what I was doing by mentoring kids I worked with, volunteering at camp cleanup days, and helping with fund raisers.

I have taught teens in Sunday School, taught Christian education classes, led community-building retreats, was a leader on a trip to Honduras with 17 teens, co-chaired the Outreach Task Force to develop goals and structures for outreach, and co-chaired the first "Outreach Board". My current involvement with St. Mark's includes co-chairing the computer learning project, being active in other areas of outreach, and coordinating a process of reflection and evaluation of our Christian education classes. All of these have been challenging - and feed my soul.

My vision for St. Mark's is that we will be risk takers: that we will warmly embrace new people in our midst, listen to their perspectives, and invite them to contribute their energy and ideas; that we will continue to value reflection and always work toward improving our Christian Ed classes; AND, at the same time, value action and "put our muscle where our mouth is" by reaching out into the community. I also envision our recognizing the here-and-now potential of our youth and inviting their fuller participation in all areas of church life and decision-making.

My hope is that St. Mark's not only will continue to be the wonderful caring, searching group of people that we have been, but also will recognize and develop our potential for becoming a strong positive force -- a beacon -- in our neighborhood and in the wider community. ☩

Yoga at St. Mark's - Since 1978

Everyone Welcome.



Bring a Friend.

First Class Free!

Recorded info: (202) 546-4964
www.edow.org/stmarkscapitolhill/arts/yoga.html

Regular Class Schedule:

SUN 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

MON 7:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

WED 7:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

WED 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. (*)

THUR 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (*)

SAT 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

(*) Gentler; all classes are open to newcomers.

Getting to Know Our Seminarians

A WORD FROM KATHERINE BUSH

By now I should be used to answering the question, tell us a little about yourself . . .

I like the fact that my religious affiliation is with people who cook pancakes before Lent, and with people who are more afraid of firm answers than they are of the questions. I am a cradle Episcopalian who never planned on going to seminary. Most of my life I "planned" on being a lawyer, like my father. Of course, as much as he's a lawyer, he's a poet, a golfer, and a student of Benedictine traditions. I guess I should have known things wouldn't be that simple. My mother didn't help either - no orderly career path for her. She has been an English teacher, a librarian, Christian Education director, and now she's an art historian and an artist.

So, no one was too frustrated that I graduated from Rhodes College with an English degree (focus on poetry), eventually taught literature and then Comparative World Religions at my alma mater, St. Mary's Episcopal School, and am now planning on becoming a Episcopal priest. Actually, I find most of those occupations to be amazingly

compatible. Story-telling is how we get at our best knowledge, and I am blessed to have begun studying our own Christian stories and also the stories of our fellow wayfarers.

My husband Stephen and I are very excited about joining the St. Mark's community. We have really felt welcomed by those of you we've met so far, and we're looking forward to getting to know the larger congregation. What a wonderfully open place to explore and support the journey we're all taking.

This has been an thrilling time for me, not just a new school, but a new environment. I've moved from my hometown of Memphis to an exciting new city. As a congregation, you seem so invested and involved in the city. But that attention to the wider world does not detract from your worship, which both my husband and I felt was simultaneously so familiar and so fresh. I'm thrilled to be working with Paul and Stephanie, and I'm really looking forward to learning from a church with such an involved laity. †

AN INTERVIEW WITH GLENDA MCQUEEN

BY FLORENCE WINKELMAN

"Everyone is Called to the Ministry of the Church."

An Interview with Glenda McQueen, Diocese of Panama.

Glenda McQueen spent years in ministry as a lay person, so the step toward ordination was not a dramatic change. But it was a change that took many years to make. Friends over the years had suggested that she pursue ordained ministry. From 1984 until 1996, Glenda worked for the Diocese of Panama, where her professional and social relationships were with people who were involved in the life of the church. In 1996 she resigned from the diocese to become a consultant specializing in human resources and training. Her new work environment gave her the space and time to reflect without daily association with clergy. She traveled throughout the world, savoring the beauty of other countries and their people, seeing the suffering and brokenness of humanity. Glenda always visited the local Anglican parish church when she traveled, to see and hear how God was served in other parts of the Anglican Communion. During her limited time at home, she worshipped in her local parish and participated on a few diocesan task forces, but her perspective was primarily from a ministry of service that was not formally associated with the church. From that distance, she recognized her heartfelt desire for ordained ministry.

Selecting Virginia Seminary was also a thoughtful process for Glenda. Her bishop preferred that she study at an Anglican seminary. Although Spanish is the language used in Panama, Glenda is bilingual, so seminaries in the United States could be considered. Ultimately, VTS was selected because her bishop believed that it is both theologically sound and willing to struggle with issues confronting the church.

"I love to discover things," she says when asked how she enjoys her courses. Her love of learning has given her tremendous delight in her core courses of Old and New Testament, Church History, and Greek. She has been involved in church programs and administration, so it has been exciting to see how the process evolved. As the church today struggles with doctrinal and pastoral issues, she finds reassurance in the knowledge that the early church councils had many conflicts and struggles to address before reaching a common understanding.

She looks forward to a life rich with ministry, of collaboration among lay and ordained ministers. "Because," she explains, "one form of ministry is not better than the other, just different." †

Candor Can't We?

BY LINDA LASCOLA

Even though I have no plans to leave St. Mark's any time soon, I find myself thinking about what I'd say in my good-bye speech. People are invited to be frank as they walk out the door. It's the St. Marks way.

We welcome criticism so much, that every year we honor our crabbiest parishioners. Our Christian education system guides us through a sometimes painful discernment process to greater self-awareness. But despite our institutionalized celebration of candor, I think we are seriously falling short in one of our core values - speaking honestly with each other. Rather than stifling my concern or saving it for my departure, I'm raising it in this article. It is written at our associate rector's invitation and with our senior warden's encouragement. They both assured me that truth-telling is still a strongly-held core value among St. Mark's leadership.

In our congregation, We say that when we have a difference with someone, we expected take our concern directly to that person. Sometimes it works out very well. Lately, however, I've talked to people who say "entre nous" that they've given up on that value, because it's backfired on them. Others say they question it, because they've seen other people's inept attempts at confrontation cause hurt feelings, not growth or enhanced communications. I think we should try to fix the system, instead of implicitly scrapping it. Remedial education would serve us better, I believe, than cultivation of some other communications techniques that we're using in its place, for instance:

Artless Dodging - talking behind people's back. Not admitting that it's easier (and more fun) than talking to the dodged one and not considering that it isolates both parties from relevant information that might resolve the situation.

Geyser Adviser - repressing criticism until it wells up and gushes out in a vituperative burst.

Reluctant Rebuke (a variation of "geyser advisor") - hoping someone will take the hint. Then, frustrated that subtle hints aren't working, getting angry at the clueless one.

Cowardly Lionizing - supporting someone privately, but "laying low" when talking with others who express a conflicting point of view.

The Naked Emperor - denying or recasting an issue that's too scary to face; discrediting or ignoring people who raise it; focusing on a more manageable issue; all of the above.

These syndromes could be explained as "human nature" - as in, "Sometimes we miss the mark." But I'm afraid we've gone from accepting that we occasionally miss the mark to sometimes not even taking aim. Instead, we aim at easier, but inappropriate targets, shoot blindly into the air, or simply lay down our arms. Through it all, we outwardly profess the core value of honesty with each other, i.e., giving and receiving the truth. To me, this seems like hypocrisy, (defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as "the feigning of beliefs, feelings or virtues that one does not hold or possess.")

So you may be thinking, "If she feels so strongly, why not just leave?" That's one choice. Another choice is to accept the hypocrisy (the "it happens everywhere" justification) and focus on what I love about St. Mark's - the choir and the physical setting. This choice involves the least active effort and lets me focus on the positive. However, somewhere in that approach, I fear I lose my soul, tacitly condoning a precarious status quo. And of course this article implies advocating yet another choice: confronting the hypocrisy. This could prove to be too hard, but I'm optimistic enough about our community to give it a try. I've seen us struggle "boldly" and successfully through difficult times and think we could do it again. This assumes, of course, that enough people perceive a problem and that the effort doesn't die a'borning (because it's too scary). So here's a start. Think about the issues raised here. When you talk to others about your views, don't say anything you wouldn't also say to me, and then say it to me too. With further discussion and openness to change, we might find that our core value could thrive, instead of limping along on life support or getting killed by an angry mob. †

JAFI...

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consternating moments of realization always led to some determination to do better.

As I think about communication and our community of St. Mark's, it is no surprise that we are interested intensely in this subject. We, an active people, have an investment in getting the word out, keeping ourselves informed as to the goings on of our communal life and our viewpoints on the variety of issues that confront and engage us.

This said, however, it seems to me that this subject of communication, at its heart, has to do with so much more than sharing information, even ideas. The sharing is but a means to an end of the maintenance of our common identity. Communication. Not only about ideas, even ideals, but identity. The stakes, therefore, are higher, greater.

And we -- each and all -- have a role, a part to play in this great endeavor... †

"Gramma said when you come on something good, first thing to do is share it with whoever you can find; that way, the good spreads out where no telling it will go. Which is right."

- Forrest Carter,
The Education of Little Tree.



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According to St.
Mark's is printed
on recycled paper.

Swinging the Doors Open

BY KEITH KRUEGER, CHAIR OF ST. MARK'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Two years ago at Shrinemont an idea was hatched that St. Mark's needed to be more conscious about encouraging the broader community to come through the doors of St. Mark's. This idea was fleshed out between content sessions and the ride back from the weekend.

That fall a small Task Force (originally called the Marketing Task Force) officially began meeting to think about how we could better reach out to our neighbors. We are seeking to create more general awareness for St. Mark's and thus attract more newcomers to our church

Last spring with Vestry approval, we launched a test-marketing period when we ran a series of ads about St. Mark's in *The Voice*, a Capitol Hill newspaper. The goal was to reach out to our Capitol Hill neighbors with an inviting message that describes our community. Based on feedback from both parishioners and nonmembers, the ads were a great success. A special thanks to John Lineberger and Greg Niblett for creating ads that capture the uniqueness of our worship, parish life, outreach and Christian Education.

During last Easter Week we hung a banner to hang on the outside of St. Mark's. It is amazing how simple things like signs make all the difference for visitors.

Last September we did a literature-drop to the Capitol Hill area. We delivered to about 70% of Hill homes postcards based on art from the four ads we created last spring. This effort was an excellent way to tell our story and invite newcomers to visit. We hope to do this again this spring.

Upcoming plans are to do a mailing to new Capitol Hill homeowners, as well as the offices of U.S. Senators & Representatives.

Since we are one of the churches closest to the U.S. Capitol, we want to invite congressional staff to join in our worship and community life. Many congressional staff are new to our city, removed from family and their home community. St. Mark's has a special role in reaching out to this audience. In concert with our efforts, Monica Mills and others have led efforts to improve and upgrade the St. Mark's website. This is increasingly a critical way to communicate, not only with members but with our community. Kudos to those involved in the new site, including our consultant Brian Gluckman of Driven By Design.

Finally, we invite you to take part in our Bring a Friend Campaign. We all probably know someone who we have thought would enjoy participating in the St. Mark's community. I certainly do. Yet, I find that I never get around to inviting them to come with us. The St. Mark's External Relations Subcommittee is encouraging you to Bring A Friend to an upcoming event or to worship service.

For example, we are encouraging parishioners to bring a friend to other St. Mark's activities, such as concerts, the St. Mark's Players, or our Sunday worship services. Its up to you to decide what venue you feel most comfortable inviting a friend. All we ask is that you do it sometime this spring.

After a recent worship service a parishioner spoke to me after I had made an oral announcement about the literature drop and the Bring A Friend Campaign. He whispered to me, "we call it marketing, other churches call it Evangelism." Whatever you call it, as a Christian community we are called to welcome others to join in our community.

For more information or to help, contact Keith Krueger at (202-265-1506) or keith@nonprofitmgt.com. †

What's a Yahoo! Group and Why Should I Care, Anyway?

BY ART ENGLER, MODERATOR

The St. Mark's Yahoo! Group is a free service that allows us to get together through a web site and email group. Our group is only open to St. Mark's members and associates. It is un-moderated, meaning that any member can post messages to the group and can review the archived messages on the website. As many of you know, this provides an easy-to-access communication link among members of our community -- be it for discussion on issues at St. Mark's, information on events, or updates on ailing, far-flung or traveling members.

The following provides a quick introduction to the many useful and easy-to-use features of the St. Mark's Yahoo! Group:

Messages: Send messages to and receive messages from the entire Yahoo! Group membership at St. Mark's (245 addresses as of March). Choose whether to receive individual emails, a daily digest, or no email at all - instead, go to the website to read them.

[Note: If you subscribe to the daily digest version, you will not receive any attachments with emails.] In any case, if you want to retrieve attachments to emails or to review any messages since we founded the group in 1999, visit the website at www.yahogroups.com and click on **StMarks**.

- To post messages, send them to: stmarks@yahogroups.com
- To subscribe to the group, send a blank message to stmarks-subscribe@yahogroups.com; and to unsubscribe, send a blank message to stmarks-unsubscribe@yahogroups.com
- If you have problems or questions, send your message to Art Engler, the list owner/moderator: stmarks-owner@yahogroups.com

Files: Upload and download files to share with others. Organize the files into folders for easier access.

Chat: Use for synchronous online communication among members online when you are.

Photos: Add, edit, organize into albums, and share with all.

Bookmarks: Link to other web pages through bookmarks.

Polls: Create and vote in polls about various topics.

Calendar: Schedule events, view the calendar, and set up reminders.

Database: Current databases include Time and Talents for Worship and Email directories. Feel free to add to and modify your own entries.

Members: View the list of current group members and their profiles.

For further questions or suggestions for the ongoing St. Mark's Yahoo! Group, please contact me at stmarks-owner@yahogroups.com.

On Being a Black Man in America: Letter to Paul and the Community

BY BILL DANNENMAIER

PAUL ABERNATHY SENT ME HIS SERMON ON THE MARY AND MARTHA STORY (FROM LUKE 10). THE SERMON BEGAN WITH SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS AND MOVED ONTO ISSUES OF RACE BEING DISCUSSED AT ST. MARK'S. THIS IMPRESSIVE SERMON SET OFF A SERIES OF RAMBLING THOUGHTS ABOUT WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW AND SOME OF WHAT I AM EXPERIENCING, BEING A "STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND."

PAUL SAID:

"How mindful we are of the intentionality necessary to face issues of race and racism. How oblivious we can be to our inner, long-playing psychological tapes of what we were taught about race. How conscious we are of the struggle to remain sensitive to the tribulations of others. How unaware we can be of the political and socio-economic power and privilege of the still dominant white American culture. How disappointed we are at the slow pace of progress towards racial reconciliation..."

I thought afresh about what it means to me to be an African-American rector of a largely white congregation. How, both admirably and sadly, this remains a remarkable thing in 21st century America. I thought about my attitudes on race. How it is that within five minutes of arising each day, something -- a thought, a feeling, a glance in the mirror, a news report -- reminds me that I'm a black man in America."

DEAR PAUL:

I am glad you took the sermon where you did, masterfully illuminating and holding the tension.

For a number of years, I have tried to understand the expression, "being a black man in America." I think recently I have gained an extra measure of understanding of some of the implications of it and what is underneath it. You probably have always thought to yourself, "I wonder what a white American in Europe thinks about being a black man in America," so I will indulge you.

About 20 years ago I saw a Richard Pryor special on HBO. He talked about the experience of going to Africa. All his life, he said, when he walked down the street, he felt like an alien. Kept an eye out for the "other" black guy on the street. And so on. But in Africa he realized he wasn't doing that, because basically everyone -- the cops, the bankers, and everyone -- was black. The white guys in Africa were the ones walking around looking for a "brother." The story stuck with me.

I always thought my German side gave me traits people associate with Germans -- strongly opinioned, intellectual, judgmental, and fond of bakery products. I thought that in going to Europe, I would be like Richard Pryor in Africa -- the left-handed guy who finally finds a left-handed guitar. But actually, it is more like learning to understand what it was like to be Richard Pryor in America.

Don't get me wrong. On a certain psychic level this is a wonderful place, a balm to my soul. But there is an alien quality to my presence here, an "otherness" that is almost like a loose tooth: poking at it hurts a little, but also feels like a release of another type of pain.

The familiar cacophony of the American city is replaced with other voices. One starts to keep an ear open for an American accent. You listen for the familiar and long for elements of cultural comfort. American prudishness appears not so unreasonable on reflection, especially when a buck-naked 70-year-old woman walks into the men's steam bath and sits in front of you and your 11-year-old son. You long for someone, just once, to say, "Do you mind if I smoke?"

You begin to understand the plight of immigrants in general. Like the character in Doctorow's *Ragtime* who just wants to get across town but is waylaid, the simplest tasks become a long story. I need clean underwear, so I want to work the washing machine, but the instructions are in six languages: German, Italian, French, Danish, Swedish, and Dutch. The little diagrammatic pictures are incomprehensible. After 34 years I am illiterate again.

So you begin to look out for your "language and culture brothers" from North America. But what does a North

American look like? I make some observations at the airport, while watching planeloads arrive: Are these Americans? Are those? Next to me are two "soul sisters," doing the same thing. They are young Asian women, sisters it turns out, from Kansas City. As we wait, we come up with an appropriate heuristic. The mix from Asian to African to Hispanic to White, non-smoking, wearing colorful clothes, smiling -- all means we are Americans.

For some reason Black people in Europe always throw me off. I mark their blackness, their otherness, sticking out in the sea of whiteness at the train station. I feel an affinity. Surely they must be Americans. I perk up my ears for that balmy breath of a Carolina, Tennessee, or Louisiana accent. But almost invariably I am dashed by the rapid patois of a "real" African or, more likely, the musical gutturals of Swiss German.

I have yet to meet and chat with a black American over here. Not that black Anglophones are absent. There are more black people in the Anglican Church here on a given Sunday than at St. Mark's, but they speak English because of the colonial excesses of the British Empire, not because they are American from ancestral participation in chattel slavery.

And laid on top of this sense of otherness that I feel in my daily life is a whole set of assumptions that other people lay upon me because I am an American. It's fascinating to have been the "default" cultural value for so long, capable of changing identities through clothing or grooming, and then becoming the object of stereotyping and sometimes prejudice.

Not that it is as extreme as the "Black Tax" and the crime of "Driving While Black" in the United States. If I keep my mouth shut and don't smile at strangers, I can "pass" without a problem. But say a word and I adopt the entire burden of being from the current center of the world's culture. And you know that, despite any language barrier, I can't help but say a few words. So I am the default American answerable for the sins of America. Though less long lasting than the sins of Ham, the sins of Bush are at least more present in the minds of the average European.

Continued on page 10

Vestry Mouse Report

BY RAIFORD GAFFNEY

This is Raiford Gaffney and this is my first report for *The Gospel According to St. Mark's* although I have now done three mouse reports on the St. Mark's eGroup. I'm repeating some information from the egroup reports since not everyone who reads the *Gospel* receives the eGroup. As background, I'm going to take the opportunity to share with you what I've been told the position is and what I plan to do. First, according to the bulletin announcement, the mouse is "...responsible for attending monthly vestry meetings and reporting back to the parish with a short report, which is usually published in the *Gospel*." Since there will be fewer *Gospels* this year due to the budget situation, my primary reporting mechanism is now via the eGroups. One good outcome from that is that I can report on each vestry meeting within a few days rather than a number of weeks. Secondly, I plan to report on items discussed at each vestry meeting which I believe would be of interest to the parish and perhaps with a different spin than reported in the official minutes.

Let me describe the format of a typical vestry meeting. The first item is general check-in for clergy, wardens, and vestry members, which is closed to outsiders. The parish administrator, Susan Block, and interested parishioners, including myself, are then invited in and the agenda distributed. Standard agenda items have been: roundtable reporting on what's new, what's working, what needs attention, and what needs acknowledgement; the Register's Report (vestry minutes); and the Treasurer's Report. Next are specific agenda topics and finally each meeting is closed with a prayer lead by a vestry member. Meetings are currently scheduled for two hours on the afternoon of the third Sunday of each month.

Specific agenda items for the first three months of this year have included By-Law Revision, Junior Warden's Report,

The 2001 Parochial Report, Lichfield Choir Visit, Strategic Planning Process, Baxter House Project, Arts Council Task Force Report Overview, Flag Resolution, Final Budget for 2002, Fundraising Policy, Annual Meeting.

Since (not because) I've begun attending vestry meeting, a number of positive reporting mechanisms have been put into place - monthly budget reports are being posted on the vestry bulletin board, as well as special reports such as an annotated version of the 2001 Parochial Report. In addition, there is a concerted effort at creating and posting annual calendars on the website, such as arts calendar, fundraising calendar, and the worship calendar. Perhaps summary information could be consolidated into one general calendar. I welcome the increased and effective usage of the St. Mark's website (www.stmarks.net) and egroup (www.yahogroups.com) for both reporting and/or soliciting discussion about such topics as financial issues, the budget, flags in the nave, painting of the capitals in the nave, etc.

Based upon my attendance at the last three vestry meetings plus being an interested/informed parishioner, I offer the following observations:

Budget Situation: Senior Warden George Meng and others have saved the immediate day with the special re-canvas. I realize that this was a unique situation but this is not the way to manage a budget. We (and we are all involved through our elected wardens and vestry members) have cut many areas to the bone in order to maintain staffing. Our physical plant is very old and needs major maintenance and repair. There is no money left in the budget for this. This is one area that we need to fund in a major way. There are many others areas that have been cut this year.

Stewardship: I don't believe this is an area we have done very well at St.

Mark's. I've benefited from training in this area through the Diocese of Virginia and by being involved at another parish and diocese. The focus really is what each individual can offer from our many blessings. The new permanent stewardship committee will be a step in the right direction. We can all benefit from training in this area. I find it only works for me when I give out of my blessings rather than a perceived need to "pay my fair share". St. Mark's isn't a club where we pay dues, as our parish mission statement says, it's a "spiritual community in which we are gathered to celebrate the gifts of God..." If I want the spiritual and community blessings I receive through/at St. Mark's to continue in my life, then I feel the need to offer my financial blessings back. In my experience is it truly more blessed to give than receive and I get back so much more when I give.

Communications: I believe that we're doing a pretty good job at this. Even having a vestry mouse position is a positive step to keep parishioners informed in a timely manner via a non-elected person. Whether we like it or not, electronic communications are now in our daily lives and I believe that St. Mark's uses this medium in a healthy way. We inform each other about the life and death of our parishioners, we dialog about important issues in our parish life such as flags in the nave, we announce courses and events, and we offer many volunteer opportunities.

I hope you find this report useful. I welcome your comments, especially as I try to balance the monthly electronic reports and the periodic written reports in the *Gospel According to St. Mark's*. There will not be a vestry mouse report for April as the only scheduled vestry meeting is during the vestry retreat which is not open to outsiders. †

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GOSPEL ARTICLE LENGTH GUIDELINE

We typically receive more submissions for publication than we have space. We have been applying an unpublished guideline of 750 words as a maximum article length - about 3 typed pages, double-spaced - with some flexibility over 750 words, depending on available space and on such factors as importance, timeliness, and literary merit. Please limit your future submissions to 750 words, or less. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. Generally speaking, submissions substantially in excess of 750 words will be returned to the author with the request that it be edited to the guideline limit. Thank you for your cooperation.

Who is My Neighbor?

BY NANCY VAN SCOYOC

Many of us ask that question when we talk about outreach. At St. Mark's we have invested much time, effort and money to come to the aid of our neighbors in Honduras, and this year Panama. We also give from our budget to efforts throughout the city and to the Capital Hill Group Ministry (CHGM) right here in our immediate neighborhood.

Our direct people-to-people efforts have included Inner City Outings where several volunteers devote a Saturday a month to taking children from Potomac Gardens public housing project on an outing. The contact with these children and their need for caring connections led us two years ago to send a group of them to camp in the summer, funded by an anonymous contribution of \$5,000. We repeated the experience last summer and sent 20 more youth to FLOC Camp near Harpers Ferry, WV.

SHARING MORE THAN MONEY

Springing from a desire to share more than money and really get to know some of these neighbors better, the Outreach Project Development Committee launched a pilot project in January. For eight weeks a half dozen or so volunteers spent Wednesday evenings at the Capper/Carrollsborg Community Center teaching women basic computer skills. Doug Siglin, a member of the committee had been instrumental in getting a grant to buy several computers for the Center. These were not being used because there was no one to teach the residents computer skills.

The group from St. Mark's decided to focus their efforts on women about to go off welfare who needed to improve their job skills. We depended on Yvonne Clary, a resident of the projects who works at the CHGM Family Resource Center, to recruit the women

for us. She did that with great enthusiasm, and produced eight women (including herself) for our first teaching session.

Not all of the students stayed through the eight weeks, but those who did learned quite a bit - and so did we. For a thank you the students gave us a magnificent dinner on the last night. Several students said they were coming back, and several teachers are coming back. Best of all, we and they both felt like we had some new friends. Stereotypes were changed. Bridges were built. We made a good beginning.

Now we are planning another 8-week session, to last from March 18 through May 6. We have some wonderful new volunteers from St. Mark's to teach, and hopefully, some equally enthusiastic students. And I am already collecting names from people who want to teach during a summer session.

I have been pondering what made this mutual learning experience work as well as it did, given our inexperience in doing this sort of thing. A few of the reasons, I think, are: We were patient with each other. We were willing to take some risks and plunge right in, knowing it wouldn't be perfect. It truly WAS a mutual experience. Students and teachers had a positive attitude and spirit of cooperation. We took time to give and ask for feedback.

We know some of our neighbors a bit better now, and warm thanks go to Yvonne Clary for being our ambassador in the Capper/Carrollsborg neighborhood. Many thanks also to Doug Siglin, who has spearheaded the project, to the teachers/tutors who were faithful through the course - Fynnette Eaton, Ray Lacey, Liz Layton, Lena Lupica and Frank Nickerson - and to the new teachers for the current session - Barbara Black, Sally Brodhead, Rhea Jack and Lynn Kneeder. †

Black in America ...

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Like the piecemeals of any construction of stereotypes, some are not so bad and frankly, some are true. I am proud, aggressive, and optimistic just like they expect me to be. In meetings, Swiss sometimes use me as a defense against Germans; hmmm, there's a twentieth century strategy if I ever heard one. As an American, I can match a typical German opinion for opinion, but can outwhimsy a German two to one on even a dour day. The English can outwhimsy me, the Scots can talk faster, and don't even get me started on the Swedes, who seem to speak everyone else's languages perfectly and offend no one.

But like Richard Wright, a black man in America who had to go to France to find out that he had previously been a black American in America, being here is great for reflecting upon one's Americanness. My working hypothesis is that the Enlightenment formed us, while the Swiss formed their identity 300 years before it. This origin colors all American political discourse: left and right, black and white. It gives us the basis of what we think is right and wrong. But it makes us different from many of our European, Asian, and African forbearers and cousins.

I read an essay on suffering by a friend in seminary. He wrote "perception and control of the intactness of one's personhood, including the perception of being 'in control,' are central to suffering." So, by this definition, putting myself in this position has given me a small and diluted taste of that wine of suffering that you as a black man in America grew up on. It is not because I am like Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man," but rather because I am more like what you describe as the black man in America: the visible man, always keenly aware of my otherness, not completely in control. †

Bill Dannenmaier and his family, active St. Mark's members when in the Washington area, are living and working in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Secret Service

BY DON THIBEAU

For twenty-five years, advisory committees have been a staple of work life for clergy, staff and leadership at St. Mark's. Part sounding board, part early-warning system, these committees are supportive venues for the "reality checks" that help manage plans and priorities at St. Mark's. The committees are meant to be a resource, a tool of sorts, for our leadership to use as they see fit.

Once a month, for nine months a year, St Mark's advisory groups work through an agenda unique to the needs of the person they serve. It is a necessarily confidential process requiring a level of trust and sensitivity rare in the workplace and uncommon at churches. Over the years, hundreds of parishioners have volunteered for this special service. There are no qualifications for membership, though vestry member may not serve. Personal openness and the important diversity of committee membership are hallmarks of this "secret" part of our community life. They seem to work best when multiple views are represented: old-timers, newcomers, singles -- the full spectrum of our community. The vestry removed the only official duty of advisory committees, a thrice-annual evaluation for the vestry, in 1999. While the "report card" is gone, the essential task of the committee remains: to tell our leadership what they don't want or can't hear in a confidential context of comfort and support.

Students of management know that strong leaders seek out divergent views. They draw strength from the give and take that colors conversations that challenge assumptions, and give voice to those not given to public displays of feedback. One former rector used the phrase "minding the back fence" to capture one of the committee's task of soliciting the views of those who leave us. Understanding the dissatisfaction of people who leave St. Mark's and bringing that to the attention of the advisory group is one way advisory committees challenge and comfort those that serve us.

Success is secret too. Minefields avoided, trial balloons shot down, and issues resolved are the subtle indicators of progress. In the end the important thing is that we uphold our leadership through this special tool, that we trust the members of these advisory committees to speak for us and support our leadership in this special way. †

For further information on St. Mark's Advisory Committees contact Bruce Ritter or Dee Hahn-Rollins.

Remembering Harriet Gregory - A Key Part of the Church That Was

BY ANN BARTON

As I listened to parishioners talk about the size of St. Mark's during our budget process, I realized that many others besides me still miss the smaller, single focus church we once had. I don't think that we can bring back that church -- certainly not the one I joined in the '60's. But it occurred to me that perhaps it would help to bury it somehow -- to have some ritual or process by which we can say goodbye to the old church and grieve for our loss. Here is my contribution to such a process -- by remembering Harriet Gregory.

Harriet Gregory was the Director of Religious Education at St. Mark's in the 1960's when I joined. She died in the early 1970's. She was my mentor, teacher, guide -- whatever term you want to use, I learned religion from Harriet. She was to me what Penniman was to Jim Adams, Bill Baxter, and Harriet herself.

Harriet was not really a typical St. Mark's type. For one thing, she was what she called a "prayer-book Christian." She read the collect for the day, whether it was used in our service or not. She knew many of them by heart and often noted a day on the calendar by a reference to its collect, as in "Stir-up" Sunday. Harriet also knew the articles of religion and sometimes used them or paraphrases of them in her teaching. This is where I learned that faith comes before good works; in a way, that makes sense to me and is very useful when I get too concerned about abstract ethics.

Many (most?) of us at St. Mark's at that time were skilled intellectualizers (or "head-trippers," as we said then). Harriet was not. She appeared to admire intellectual gifts, but saw definite limitations in the analytic approach. Once when I was struggling with some career decisions, she recommended that I read Kirkegaard's *Purity of Heart*. "Don't study it," she said. "Just read it." It was good advice (I would have had a very hard time with Kirkegaard had I tried to read his work in the linear fashion that I had learned for textbooks).

She had a reputation for speaking in parables. I can't remember any of those actual parables, although I do remember a lesson summary that consisted of the teachers singing "The More We Get Together." However, Harriet Gregory often made short cryptic statements and refused to elaborate on them. I think she realized that language is at best a clumsy tool for facing the realities we need to face, and at worst a very efficient tool for avoiding them. She wanted us to have the reality, not the language.

She accomplished a lot with short, simple questions, asked in a soft voice and in her typical slow southern accent. I remember a class where the launch had to do with babysitting. One of the men said he had never babysat or had a babysitter (I think this was quite true, he was brought up in a household full of servants). Harriet let that sit a minute and then asked "Well, do you ever have any trouble making decisions?" The man was notoriously indecisive, so this pretty well brought him back to the point at hand.

Harriet was quite frank about being manipulative -- and not at all apologetic about it. But she did it by perceiving where each of us actually was at the time, and cutting us off at the pass when we tried to avoid what we were actually experiencing. From her example, I got the message that being able to listen to where people were -- finding the reality behind the words -- was the whole point of all the work we did as teachers. With her teaching, I never felt that someone else's reality was being forced upon me nor that I was being strait-jacketed into a predetermined mold.

After Harriet died, I thought the educational style at St. Mark's became much more rational and, for me, less real. The rationality certainly helped grow and nurture many aspects of our parish life, and it probably helped some people get the religious message, as well. But for me, Harriet had the truly functional approach, and I think I will always miss it. †

**The Gospel
According to St.
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We welcome contributions on any
aspect of parish life by members of
the St. Mark's Community.



Send contributions to the Editor by
email at:
tvandorpe@thecarlylegroup.com
or place in The Gospel's mailbox in
the undercroft.

Article guideline: 750 words

St. Mark's Worship Schedule

Sunday

9:00 a.m.

Holy Eucharist - The Nave

9:45 a.m.

Sunday School - The Undercroft

10:00 a.m.

Sermon Seminar - The Nave

11:00 a.m.

Holy Eucharist - The Nave

**Babysitting is available
from 9am to 12:30pm**

Thursday

**Each Thursday at noon, St. Mark's celebrates the Holy
Eucharist, remembering an event in the life of Christ, or a
saint or hero in our tradition.**

the gospel according to St. Mark's

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