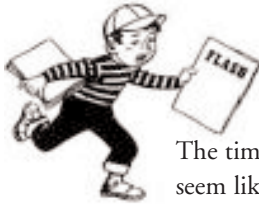




THE GOSPEL

According to Saint Mark's | April 2005



HEAR YE... HEAR YE...

The time change to daylight savings made the single 9:00 service on April 2 seem like 8:00, and the day was gray with fierce winds. Nonetheless, the service and the annual meeting following the service were well attended. More than 500 parishioners got their ballots, grabbed a light lunch in a paper bag and headed back to the nave where Paul Abernathy praised those stepping down, and the Vestry candidates gave statements and responded to two questions.

The results of the election at the April 2 annual meeting are as follows:

For Senior Warden: *Mike Townsend*

For Junior Warden: *Charlie Donnelly (who appointed Jack Burton as Manciple)*

For Vestry: *Eileen Blumenthal, Lisa Sotir Ozkan, Margaret Wood*

For Delegate to the Diocese: *Don Mosher*

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Numbers: Connecting the Dots *by Ellen R. Cardwell*

RECENTLY, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT NUMBERS.

For the Maundy Thursday dinner, we charged \$10 a ticket but were almost unable to cover expenses, the bulk of which is for our custodial staff to re-set the nave. It used to be that volunteers from the congregation re-set the nave after the Maundy Thursday service. But it now seems that they are too old to do it, and younger parishioners want to go home instead of moving furniture from 10:00 p.m. until midnight during a workweek. So, those who attend are paying to get it done.

Having just spent four weekends re-setting the nave along with the Becket cast and crew—on occasion until 2:00 a.m.—I wondered, “What would attendees at plays have to pay if we had the custodial crew do all our re-sets?” On the other hand, with nearly 100 community theater companies in the Washington area, the Players are competing not only for audiences but also for actors. Our audiences have shrunk dramatically. The Players, like many other small community theaters, are considering limiting the season and choices of plays. And while we still attract excellent volunteer actors, the rigors of re-setting are taking a toll—not only on older members or the cast and crew but also on our ability to perform smaller-cast plays.

The Players board has decided to tackle this problem by investing in new, lightweight, easily moved platform risers. At a cost of \$15,000, it will take several years to acquire a full set.

Which brings us back to the St. Mark's Church budget and to volunteerism. We have not met our budget goals in two of the last three years. We reach out to attract new parishioners, but it takes time to cultivate people who can and will pledge liberally and who will see the value in volunteering for the many jobs that make our parish work. Retirees are moving away, and some who stay are on fixed incomes. In the meantime, young families with children may not be able to make up the shortfall in volunteer time or financial pledging. Parish managers have to beg to get openings filled. Frequently the same people are doing the same volunteer jobs repeatedly; there are few replacements in sight. And at the same time, when we can't count on volunteers, we look to pay for services we have come to want and expect—or go without completely. But then, we only squeak by come budget time—unable to replace volunteer labor with paid services.

Somehow we need to pay attention to personally and individually inviting new members to volunteer their time, thus building the value they derive from their belonging to St. Mark's. We also need to rethink who we are, what we want and what we can actually afford. Our dialogue about stewardship may help us decide what we're willing to give to shepherd our church where we want it to go. †

(Editor's Note: See article about stewardship on page 2)



To Give or Not to Give...A Response

by Gene Kendall, Jr., Chair, Stewardship Committee

In February's *Gospel*, George Meng's stewardship article mentioned three classical ways to view stewardship: *ordinary stewardship*, the regular practice of returning to God a portion of our abundance; *extraordinary stewardship*, special occasions in the life of the community that call us to give beyond our ordinary habits; and *legacy stewardship*, the disposal of assets accumulated over one's lifetime.

He also proposed another perspective, that we as productive individuals got where we are by hard work and are thus not *obliged* to give away one penny of what we have earned. Concerning this perspective, I want to address its key word...obliged...Are we *obliged* to give anything back—be it our money, time, talent, whatever, *obliged*?

On a trip to Salt Lake City in February, I had the chance to talk with some locals about membership in the Mormon Church. In that conversation I was educated on a concept unique to

Latter Day Saints folk...the concept of being "temple worthy." A Google search of the term led me to this definition: "The road to worthiness involves adherence to a list of requirements ranging from regular attendance at meetings and paying a full tithe to not drinking coffee or tea. A temple recommend is an identification card that entitles the bearer to enter a Mormon temple. It is issued only to Mormons who have met these and other conditions."

One of the conditions of your being temple worthy is that you have paid up your tithing. To belong to a neighborhood LDS "stake," you are obliged to disclose your gross income, and you are assigned a 10 percent figure to contribute. This is your obligation. When that wedding comes up for one of your family members, if your financial obligations are in arrears, no temple for you, because you aren't temple worthy.

Stewardship, as I see it, is not about

being *obliged*. Obligation speaks to me of duty, of paying dues to be a member of the club. Real stewardship springs from an awareness of abundance, or what some call blessing, and choosing to respond from that place rather than from a sense of obligation. I give of my time, talent and treasure because I can, because I want to, because it reflects my values and beliefs. Some of that giving is directed here, some of it elsewhere. There are always days when I tighten my grip on what I choose to give or not give, because it's MINE. I earned it. I deserve it. Not exactly a temple worthy state of mind, is it? The theological question that keeps coming back for me: is it really *mine*?

The Stewardship Committee wants to raise the level of dialogue on this subject. We hope the April 10 sermon by Canon Mary Sulerud from the National Cathedral will contribute to our awareness and discussion. †

Seuss, Seuss, Seuss !

Performances of Seussical:

Fridays, April 29, May 6 and 13, 8:00 p.m.

Saturdays, April 30, May 7 and 14, 8:00 p.m.

Sundays, May 1 and 8 at 3:00 p.m.

Adults: \$15 adults

Students/Seniors: \$13

Children: \$6

*Saint Mark's own players are strutting their stuff
The last two days of April and if that isn't enough
We'll do again week after week.
So make reservations and come take a peek.*

*The play is all music all dancing and more
And you can see Horton softshoe cross the floor
You'll also see Mazie, Gertrude and Whos
There's a Cat and a Hat who won't let you snooze!*

*The cast is quite large, but if you look you will spot
Both fellow parishioners and some folks who are not.
The costumes and setting will knock off your socks
This show's so amazing, it's OK to gawk.*

*The show previewed on Broadway before doing the nave
But OUR tickets aren't pricey so think what you save!
Bring the kids, bring the oldsters—we'll cut them
some slack
But do make reservations or a seat you may lack.*

*The Seussical show will be a great treat
With your favorite characters keeping the beat.
Check out www.stmarksplayers.org to see when to go.
Or call us in DC: 546-9670. †*



The Terribly Patient God Still Waits *by Alicia Ruble*

"I believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah...whom the institutional Church...has rejected since the day of his death in favor of something more reasonable, more controlled and controllable... Christianity has journeyed far from what Jesus of Nazareth was about." This statement of faith provides the opening salvo of Dr. Verna J. Dozier's book, *The Dream of God: A Call to Return*.

For 50 years, St. Mark's has been blessed to have in its midst Verna Dozier, the woman considered by many to be the best Bible teacher in the country. But Verna Dozier's "quietly radical" voice has become quieter still in recent years because of the advanced Parkinson's disease from which she suffers.

Forty people from St. Mark's and elsewhere in our city met together during Lent to wrestle with the prophetic vision of *The Dream of God*, led by an inspired teaching team: the Rev. Paul Abernathy, Brock Hansen, Gene Kendall, Lynn Kneedler and Dee Hahn-Rollins.

From Genesis to the present day, human beings have continually rejected the Kingdom of God in favor of the kingdoms of this world. The people of Israel, rejecting the leadership of the "rough and ready" judges raised up by God, complained to Samuel that they wanted "a king to govern us like all the nations." Similarly, the disciples of Jesus failed to understand him when he told them "he who would be great among you must be your servant" and "my kingdom is not of this world."

Verna Dozier considers Emperor Constantine's conversion to

Christianity in the fourth century to be a disaster for the followers of Jesus. She suggests that Christianity was subdued by the state when Constantine converted and that the Christian Church after Constantine was co-opted by imperial power and protocol.

She uses Dostoevsky's great Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* to describe the ways in which the institutional church succumbed to the temptations of "miracle, mystery and authority" to avoid having to deal with the "awesome freedom" promised by Jesus. By worshipping Jesus instead of following him, we (and the church) reject his call to embody the Kingdom of God on earth.

The alternative reality described by Jesus in his parables has given way to "privatized" faith. Instead of engaging in "Kingdom of God" thinking, we spend six days a week accommodating the kingdoms of this world, relegating spirituality to Sunday mornings.

Instead of following Jesus in challenging the kingdoms of this world (including the institutional church), we practice private acts of charity. We need a new definition of love if we are to follow God's call. And, for Verna Dozier, that love is justice in action.

And, we need a new definition of sin. Not our petty failings, but rather our failure to meet God's call to embody His Kingdom. As Verna Dozier says, we have all failed the dream of God. And the terribly patient God waits for us to return. †

Safeguarding God's Children *by Kitty Donnelly*

Safeguarding children is something that we all care about... as parents, godparents, teachers, volunteers with youth and as parishioners who enjoy the sense of extended family that we have at St. Mark's. Safeguarding God's Children is also the name of the new diocesan training for child sexual abuse prevention. Taking the training is a way to empower ourselves to protect the children in our lives. Effective June 1, it is also required of everyone who works or volunteers with children at St. Mark's or in the diocese, in any capacity, from youth events to special activities, from Sunday school classes to service trips. If you plan to be involved with youth or children's activities or even just think that you might help with summer Sunday school, you should sign up for training.

In February, I attended one of the new training sessions and found it thought-provoking and empowering. The group of about 30 included people from throughout the diocese: clergy, support staff, lay leaders, teachers and parents. Lay leaders introduced the program and then showed two new videos, one aimed at the church's professional ministries and the other aimed at parents and congregations. After viewing the videos, we answered study guide questions in small groups and had a lively discussion in the full group. The videos dispelled myths about abuse. They encouraged us to be aware of inappropriate behavior in adults, to be alert for warning signs in children and to teach our children ways to protect themselves.

The underlying idea is that if one child can be protected from harm through this

training, we have accomplished something worthwhile. More than just a requirement from the diocese for youth ministries, consider this training an opportunity to strengthen our understanding of child abuse issues and our ability to reduce the risk of harm to youth. I encourage you all to take the training. You can sign up online by going to www.edow.org, going to the Youth section and selecting "Standards for Youth and Children's Ministries." Training takes place throughout the diocese as three-hour sessions on Saturdays and on weeknights. The website lists training dates scheduled for April, May and June. More dates will be announced in the summer. If you have questions, talk with Shearon Williams or with any of the co-directors for Christian Education: Jane Sherman, Beth Mahood Andrews, Matt Ossolinski or me. †



Summer Trip to Honduras

July 30 - August 6, 2005

Have you listened for years to the sermons of those who have gone on the trips to Honduras but never had the time to go yourself? Are you new to the congregation and wonder why we pray for the Diocese of Honduras or the San Marcos cluster of churches each Sunday? This summer there is an opportunity to see for yourself how connections are made between St. Mark's and the people of Honduras.

The Companion Diocese Committee of Washington is sponsoring a diocesan trip to Honduras July 30 - August 6. A meeting will be held **Sunday, May 1 at 4:00 p.m.** in Satterlee Hall, the parish hall of St. Alban's Church on the cathedral grounds. The trip is open to adults and teens. The approximate cost will be \$1,200.

Some historical context. Saint Mark's has had a relationship with a group of coastal villages in Honduras since 1989. Groups of teens and adults take a service trip to Honduras approximately every other year. There have been additional adult-only trips. Projects have varied... building school desks and benches, planting trees, presenting drama and art programs at local schools, even helping to build a new community for people who lost their homes in Hurricane Mitch of 1998. What surfaces in the sermons following these trips, however, is appreciation for the gifts we receive from the Hondurans. They offer us friendship and show us a simpler way of life with joy and faith, family and community.

Looking forward. At the request of the Bishop of Honduras, the Diocese of Washington is currently focusing its efforts in two deaneries (church regions) on a mountainous area of the country in the center of the country. The region has two towns (larger than the villages we know but small by city standards), many remote communities without many resources and one of the prime cloud forests in Honduras. High-priority projects include new schools, micro-enterprises to raise the standard of living and medical clinics. There are plenty of churches and schools in this region with which to connect as we have with the churches along the North Coast.

St. Mark's faces a choice about its work in the next couple of years: whether to return to the communities along the North Coast or to become acquainted with communities in a very different part of Honduras. St. Mark's participants on the diocesan trip will advise the parish's Honduras and Youth Committees about goals and options for the next adult and teen trip, scheduled for June 2006.

One Sunday in late April there will be a short pre-meeting at St. Mark's to answer questions from people who would like more information before deciding whether or not to attend the diocesan meeting at St. Alban's. If you are interested in attending the meeting at St. Mark's or at St. Alban's, please contact Betsy Agle at (202-546-0269 or betsy@washpathfind.com), Bill Himelright (202-518-5437) or Lara Denardo (240-277-3379).†

Ancient Poetry Meets Modern Music in Concert on April 22

by David Wilcox and
Nancy Pettit

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.

Don't go back to sleep.

*People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.*

The door is round and open.

Don't go back to sleep.

—*Jelaluddin Rumi*

—Excerpt from *The Essential Rumi*, translations by Coleman Barks with John Moyne, 1995

The 13th century Persian poet Rumi is the most popular poet in the 21st century world. Now that's endurance. His work, along with that of fellow Sufi mystic Hafiz, plus St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Assisi, Jewish poets Judiah Haevi and Solomon Den Judah, Tukaram from India, Zen Buddhist Dogan and others have been set to contemporary melodies by popular singer-songwriters David Wilcox and Nancy Pettit. Their forthcoming CD, "Out Beyond Ideas," will be the focus for their April 22 acoustic concert at 8:00 p.m. at St. Mark's.

"These are medicine songs to live with, whether it be singing to yourself washing the dishes, sharing with a dying friend or leading a community gathering," Dave Wilcox said. "These are the ancient poems of the wisdom keepers of many world traditions, and the songs offer a direct taste of the field of peace that Rumi and these other poets experienced. It's fitting that the proceeds benefit international peace work."

From the Parish Registry

February 27 to March 29, 2005

Confirmation/Reception

Patricia Mary Lyons was Received at the Washington National Cathedral February 26, 2005

Transfer In

William Himelright, from All Saints' Episcopal Church, Pasadena, CA.

Continued on p. 5



Ancient Poetry *Continued from p. 4*

Dave and Nance are donating all proceeds from the CD and related concerts, including this one, to the University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management's Partners in Conflict and Partners in Peacebuilding Projects. The projects involve work with local partners in vulnerable, high-risk countries around the world to help them build a sustainable, just and inclusive peace. Finding common ground across cultural, religious, ethnic and political divides allows partners to collaborate to address human needs and promote con-

structive change. Dr. John Davies, co-director of the partners projects, will give a brief overview of the group's work at the St. Mark's concert.

Other special guests on April 22 include Dr. Suheil Bushrui, author, poet, translator and foremost authority on Kahlil Gibran; and Leda Saeedian, Persian classical singer and Rumi translator.

For those familiar with Dave's more mainstream folk recordings (he regularly sells out the Birchmere and the Barns at Wolftrap), be aware that this is not your normal David Wilcox concert, although

he may perform a few of his earlier songs. But you'll find this new music well worth hearing—a gift for your ears and your soul.

Make reservations quickly for the concert on Friday, April 22, as it is expected to sell out. E-mail songsforpeace@comcast.net or call 410-992-0632 or 301-270-1613. Be sure to leave a callback number and the number of seats you need. A \$20 donation is requested (on site). Contact Vicki Street at vstreet@earthlink.net or 301-270-1613, if you have any questions or if you'd like to volunteer to help at the event. †

ENCORE: Jazz Group Booked for Another Third Agers Event, May 21



St. Mark's parishioners Bill Rau and Arnold Taylor are members of a local jazz club, which practices twice month at a senior center in Arlington. Members of the "Lee Senior Citizen Jammers" played at a luncheon in January sponsored by the St. Mark's Third Agers. They were

such a hit that the Third Agers are bringing them back to entertain at another luncheon on Saturday, May 21. The event also includes a professional storyteller, who will lead an exercise on unearthing and narrating family stories.

Pictured at the January event are from left to right: Helen Mulroney, piano;



Pete Coleman and Dwayne Thompson, guitars; Roy "Speedy" Tolliver, violin; Steve Emory, guitar; Charles "Chuck" Vasaly, clarinet; Arnold Taylor, snare drum; Bill Rau, alto sax and clarinet; and Sam Levine, trombone. Guitarist Steve Emory was active with the St. Mark's

Players for 15 years. Trombonist Sam Levine, who is in his eighties, played with several great bands, including Tommy Dorsey's in the 40's and Louis Pima's in the 30's.

The group has played together in the Washington area for about 15 years, performing in retirement homes, senior centers, churches and sometimes for a

wedding, funeral or special birthday. They donate their services, but occasionally someone is inspired to make a donation to them. A recent donation of \$125 was given to the Capital Focus Jazz Band, a youth band sponsored by the Potomac Jazz Club, to help send the group of D.C. teenage jazz students to a youth jazz festival in California. †

Photography by Larry Cardwell

Prayer List

Our prayers are requested for these members of our parish family:

Taylor Adams

Linda Barnes

Heather Burneson

Paul Bugge and family

Karen Cox

Richard Dobson

Verna Dozier

Elissa Feldman

Karen Gangloff (in Iraq)

Jo Ellen Hayden

Pat Latin

Beryl Lillaston

Bertha Martin

Mary Lacey Nohrden

Reed Watts (in Iraq)

Nancy and John Yanish

Washing Feet

by *Elin Whitney-Smith*

I was sitting in the bathroom soaking my feet on Maundy Thursday. I prepare my feet because the foot washing ritual confronts me with my fear of vulnerability. I can easily wash another's feet, but to allow someone—friend, stranger, acquaintance, not-friend—to clean my feet exposes me, and my bunions, in a way that I'm not quite up to. So, I, in my weakness, wash, pumice and pedicure in anticipation.

As I soaked, I thought about my experience of Lent. My reading of the Palm Sunday sermon—if one does not believe in the literal bodily resurrection, then the crucifixion is meaningless—disturbs me. And the exhortation hurt and angered me.

This reading of the resurrection and crucifixion disturbs me because it says that my way of thinking is impossible. For me, a literal, physical resurrection is like a get *out of jail free* card. It makes the cross *less* meaningful: death is not terrible if it is not death. I believe that Jesus is dead as my mother is dead, as Martin Luther King is dead, as Malcolm X is dead.

Yet they all live.

When people act in courage to speak the truth to power despite their vulnerability (Martin and Malcolm and Jesus are there), they live in those people. People willing to die for their beliefs truly live.

They live eternally, as a quality of life rather than a quantity, because they keep their truth in the face of death. That is what it means, for me, to say Jesus triumphed over death—that the fear of death could not stop or change his teaching or his life. The cross is an on-going symbol that we triumph over death as we live what we believe. If we act in accord with Jesus' teaching, then Jesus is amongst us.

When we gather in their name, they live. When my sister and I gather, my mother is with us. When we gather, without restrictions, for the Eucharist, then we are the mystical body of Christ. Friends, not-friends, strangers, acquaintances and newcomers eating together recreate Christ. This is *when* God exists.

Open communion (a form of group vulnerability) is why I came to St. Mark's. The exhortation made me uncomfortable because it says one should not participate in the Eucharist without proper preparation. We are dis-invited and the *work* of the Eucharist—to unite us as the body of Christ warts, bunions, sin and all—is not done. Jesus ate with prostitutes and sinners. They had not had proper preparation. They were vulnerable. The eating together was both the preparation and the sacrament: a sacrament of inclusion, healing, service and love.

And yet here I am, not facing death, just facing exposing my feet to a friend—afraid to be vulnerable. Hence the washing before the washing in preparation for the acceptance of a work of love. †