



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.

DECEMBER 2001

Happy Holidays!

"THE JOURNEY"

BY THE REVEREND DR. STEPHANIE J. NAGLEY

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth to the city of David called Bethlehem. Mary went with him and while they were there she delivered her child.

The journey between Nazareth and Bethlehem is a long one over hard trails and rough terrain. Mary and Joseph set out not because they want to travel, but because it is ordered. They had to go to Bethlehem. They are forced to respond to the king.

Mary and Joseph's journey is ours. We are always going toward and coming from Bethlehem. Our journey is toward the king, but we know now that the king is a child. Their journey and ours transcends time.

Centuries after Jesus birth, in a country far from the Judean wilderness, an artist painted his experience of the journey to Bethlehem. In the hands of Pieter Bruegel Bethlehem becomes a Flemish town in the year 1566 - another country, another town, another king. Instead of Emperor Augustus it is King Philip II of Spain. King Philip needs his taxes and the people are ordered to respond. Bruegel's Bethlehem is a cold, snow covered Flemish town.

In the painting a mother and child leave the registration window and a man lays down his money to be collected by an official in a fur-trimmed coat. A second official checks the registered to be sure the correct payment is made. The inn where the payments are made offers warmth, lodging and food, but outside that inn the scene is cold and gloomy.

Travelers make their way across a frozen river. Among the crowd, almost hidden in the crowd, is a woman pulled on a donkey by a man. We know that those two people are Mary and Joseph. Two people in a crowd doing what they must do. In the background is a shack. A rough cross is perched precariously on the roof. This shack, no doubt, will be the place Mary will give birth.



The journey to Bethlehem and the journey in Bruegel's painting are journeys between two worlds and two powers. Augustus and Philip represent the outer world, where rules the gods of power and control, the gods of security and certainty.

The gospel suggests another power and another reality. The journey to Bethlehem is in response to a king but a king quite different than what the world has known. In simple stark surroundings a child is born. It is pure gift, a gift that will make all the emperors and kings seem small and unimportant in comparison.

Mary wraps that gift in bands of cloth. Within the wrapping is the awakening of the world -- an awakening of the real meaning for our journey to Bethlehem. Once again we find ourselves in Bethlehem with the birth of new life. Such a mystery that we, like Mary, toss about in our hearts. ✚

SANTA'S BROTHERS

BY JUDITH ANN HILLARD



When Olivia was three-year's-old, we took her to the Pentagon City Mall for her annual chat with Santa Claus. She had her picture taken on his lap, and they even created a computer disk with a screensaver

of the two of them for our viewing pleasure at work and home. It is an adorable picture, one we have much enjoyed. Olivia came away from their talk so excited about her list of wants being heard by the good elf himself. The visit took place early in December of that year.

A couple of weeks later, needing a few more gifts and toys, we visited FAO Schwartz at Georgetown Mall. It was lunchtime and their mall's Santa was walking around on his own, maybe on a fifteen-minute break. Anyway, he was smaller, and wore horn-rimmed glasses rather than round golden ones. Instantly, Olivia froze in her tracks and tugged at my hand, pulling down to her level. "Mama," she pointed, clearly dismayed. "That's a different Santa." Sure enough, I noticed, it was. Without thinking, I patiently explained that at this time of year, particularly so close to Christmas Eve, Santa Claus is very busy. He can't visit every mall in the country himself every time, so sometimes he sends his brothers. "He has brothers?" she asked, surprised and delighted.

"Yes. LOTS of them," I assured her. Some of his brothers look a lot like him, but others really don't. Sort of like how Aunt Jaime and I look different, but we're still sisters. She nodded, understanding completely. So I continued, "The dark haired ones wear wigs that are white, to match their older brother's hair."

"Santa's hair!" She declared.

"Exactly. And the ones who don't grow good beards, you know, like Uncle Phil can't grow a good moustache? Well, those brothers wear fake beards."

"Just like their big brothers!" she explained to me, nodding her head up and down.

"Yes. But you see, the thing is, they never talk about it. They think nobody notices. So we pretend like we don't notice. Do you understand?" I implored, wondering how I'd come up with this one, so wanting her belief to continue a few more years. At least until she got to kindergarten and some kid wrecked it for her. I wanted her to have two more years, after all. I wasn't being greedy or spreading malicious lies.

"I think so. If you ask them if they are the real Santa, it might hurt their feelings?" Olivia suggested.

"That's right. And we wouldn't want to do that, because all the brothers go home at night at they tell Santa what each child wants. You wouldn't want, say, the youngest one to go home and say, 'Well, Olivia Hillard wants a new doll, a red bike, a yellow sweater, but skip the bike because she hurt my feelings.'" I mimicked her wide-eyed comprehension of the levity of the problem.

Agreeing with me that it would be rude to do otherwise, Olivia simply walked up to the resting "Santa" and told him hello. He shook her hand and asked her name, "Olivia Grace Hillard" she announced with gusto as he belly-laughed, sort of.

Running back to me, she said, "Yep, he was a brother. The one I took my picture with was the real one because he already KNEW my name."

Jump ahead one year. We have matinee, first row tickets to the Christmas Celebration at the Kennedy Center. We had lunch there in the terrace restaurant, dressed Olivia all up in velvet and leotards and shiny black patent leather Mary Jane's. Somebody in the elevator told us that she was everybody's idea of Christmas, all dressed up like that. Of course, he didn't see her after lunch. But that's another story, for another time.

A tall man in a tuxedo and an equally tall woman in red velvet Santa-like dress hosted the show. They were both extremely handsome people, and Olivia thought the woman looked like Barbie, but with dark hair. As the various acts progressed, and just before intermission, we were dazzled by a young African American tap dancer from the University of Maryland. Apparently this young man has studied under Gregory Hines and Mikhail Barishnikoff, among others. He was indeed fabulously talented. He was joined on the stage by 8 or 10 young girls who were also tap dancing in holiday array. But the main dancer was dressed exactly like Santa Claus.

Olivia was at that point sitting astride my lap, mouth agape, watching the show. Then, as if the memory just hit her, she leaned over and stage whispered to me, in a conspiratorial voice since it IS, after all, a secret, "Mama, is he a BROTHER?"

After the group of older ladies seated directly behind us recovered, which took some doing since we could smell the martini-luncheon on their communal breath, I felt the need to explain the full story. I probably could have saved myself the effort, as they enjoyed their first rendition so fully. †

THE SOUNDTRACK OF THE SPIRIT: CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF MUSIC AT ST. MARK'S

BY DON THIBEAU



Think about it... of whom can you say; he has been present at and contributed to some of the most significant events of the last ten years of your life (especially if you tend to have significant events at church) and yet whose name might be the last to your lips in remembering those events...

Keith Reas. His contributions to our lives are unique. For the last ten years; the music he makes, the choirs he directs and the spirit of our church have been coming together as a soundtrack of sorts for our spiritual life. Especially on the sundays we drag ourselves, our friends and family to church, his music greets us. For ten years of the significant and the not so, for the times we baptize, marry and bury; he is there. For ten years, Keith has been present in our lives at our church. It's time to say thanks.

I've come to know Keith through the Saint Mark's Music Director's Advisory Group. It is in this barely official capacity that I have come to a high regard for him as a professional and a fan of his leadership. A wise man once told me, leaders are different. They are distinct. You know where they're coming from and where they are going. Keith is like that. Keith's capacity to communicate a vision and his openness to suggestions inform his professionalism. But it is his decisions about what music is to be so heavily invested in by the choirs that is the hallmark of his leadership. This to me is one source of the resilience and growth of our music program over ten years. It also makes him a clear target of those with other hymns favorites and different music sensibilities. Leadership is like that. St. Marks is like that.


Our music program is clearly different. The quality and strength of our choirs is self-evident. It's possible to find other churches where the music program is as sophisticated as ours. What is different is how central

music has become to our community life -surely not the center but essential nonetheless. For the newcomer taken aback by just how good the music is on an ordinary Sunday, for a child hearing a soloist for the first time, and for many of us, the sweep of energy we feel when the choir of the congregation joins the choir on the high altar.

Many of us have experienced the last ten years of music at St. Mark's as a powerfully positive and sustaining force in our spiritual and community life. This rang true particularly through the transition years of late. At a time when so much was in doubt, the choirs grew, traveled and reached new levels of experience and excellence. Now, in a more settled state, we can appreciate more subtle impact of the music program; how it acts as outreach through the choirs of all ages, how it is one-way newcomers are drawn to St. Marks and one of the reasons they stay

In September, A Gala Concert served to express the pride of the St. Mark's community in Keith's work. The Concert was a joyful public acknowledgment of the gratitude we feel to the St Mark's Choirs and their Director. It was an all-church festival that underscored this one way we are different as a community. The Gala demonstrated again how the arts keep people connected in spirit. It showed how music has come to differentiate the St. Mark's experience in Washington.



For those of us who are tone deaf, distant from church processes and music programming, we're especially sensitive to ways connections Keith and the choirs help us connect to our church. Thank you Keith Reas for your leadership and for the ten years of music at St. Mark's. 

ST. MARK'S CHOIR SINGS KEITH'S PRAISES

BY VICKI STREET, PRESIDENT

On September 22, it was the delight of the Choir of St. Mark's to produce a festive reception to honor our cherished Director of Music, Keith Reas, following his glorious organ concert. The support from both inside and outside the choir was overwhelming, as documented through the list of volunteers on the bulletin board outside the Parish Hall.

While the reception wasn't a surprise to Keith, there were some unexpected tributes that day, including numerous gifts and special presentations. The choir's favorite was made possible through the genius of several of our members: A recasting of a Cole Porter classic. We held several secret rehearsals and learned that Cole Porter is tough! But that didn't stop us from attempting to parade our serenading so we could tell Keith how great he is . . .

Incidentally, Keith grew up in Big Flats and vacations at Keuka Lake in NY; composer Paul Leary has written a mass for our choir as well as an organ concerto for Keith's concert; and Keith will be happy to answer any further questions!

With deep thanks to Nancy Karpeles, Anne Folan and Lou Bayard . . .

"You're The Top!"

In honor of Keith Reas' 10 Years as Director of Music at St. Mark's

Lyrics by Lou Bayard & Anne Folan

Music by Cole Porter, arranged by Nancy Karpeles

**At words poetic we're so pathetic
That we always have found it best
Instead of getting 'em off our chest
To let 'em rest
Unexpressed
We hate parading our serenading
As we'll probably
miss a bar
But if this ditty is not so pretty
At least it'll tell you how great you are ...**

**You're the top
You're a Bach cantata
You're the top
You are veal piccata
You're the shapely vowels of a Herbert
Howells refrain
You're the Doge's palace, you're Thomas
Tallis,
You're Bishop Jane**

**You're the beans
In a nicoise salad
You're the teens
In an 'N Sync ballad
We don't sing on key or discern a bee
from bop
But if baby we're the bottom, you're the
top!**

**You're the top
You're a day spent sailing
You're the top
Even when we're wailing
You're an isle enchanted, a line that's
chanted in
An ancient tone mode, you're a Grecian
urn ode,
You're Phrygian**

**You're the cap
Couldn't find a better man
You're the gap
In the smile of Letterman
You're a fine Merlot, a Pinot Grigio
But if baby we're the tyros, you're the Pro!**

**You're the top
You're a mass by Leary
You're the top
You're a righteous Kyrie
You're the blessed calm of the holy
Psalmery
You're an antique rocker, you're
World Cup soccer,
You're Unit Three**

**You're the stroke
Of the Tiger's putter
You're the bloke
Who made Big Flats flutter
When we sing it's clear you can hear the
eardrums pop
But if baby we're the bottom, you're the
top!**

**You're the clue
To the Will Shortz puzzles
You're the brew
That a wine snob guzzles
You're a fine champagne, you're a Down
East Maine clambake
You're a hearty samba, you're Siyahamba,
You're Keuka Lake**

**You're the sum
Of the Mendelsohnry
You're the hum
Of a Carmelite nun'ry
We make sounds that grate, when we syn-
copate it's slop
But if baby we're the bottom
He's the one for us and we got 'im
But if baby we're the bottom, you're the
top!**

CONCERT SERIES CELEBRATES THE POWER OF MUSIC

BY ELIZABETH BELL TOWNSEND

Vocal Glories, the Music at St. Mark's 2001-2002 Concert Series, is off to a terrific start. On November 2nd, Keith S. Reas directed the Alexandria Choral Society in the first performance of the series, which celebrates the beauty and power of the human voice. Four concerts remain in the series.

To kick off 2002, the second concert in the series will feature Modern Musick, a new baroque chamber orchestra. On Sunday, January 6th, at 4:00 pm, Modern Musick will present "Music on Epiphany," a festive program of baroque music, highlighting concertos by Vivaldi. Among the familiar faces returning to St. Mark's with this new group are director/cellist John Moran and concertmaster/violinist Risa Browder. They describe their performance as "a dazzling program of music ranging from the virtuoso to the sublime, offering the perfect occasion for a final reflection on the Christmas season and an inspiring start to the new year."

Music at St. Mark's invites you to join us in an ongoing celebration of the power of beautiful music, which will continue with the following performances:

Sunday, February 10, 2002, 4:00 pm

Caroline Thomas, operatic soprano

Sunday, February 24, 2002, 3:00 pm

**The Choir of St. Mark's, directed by
Keith S. Reas**

Saturday, April 6, 2002, 7:30 pm

**The Choir of Lichfield Cathedral, directed by
Andrew Lumsden**

Tickets for the Concert Series are still available and can be ordered in two ways:

Call the Concert Series line at 202-543-1397, extension 4

or

Send your check for \$65, payable to Music at St. Mark's, along with your name, address, and contact phone number to: Music at St. Mark's, 118 3rd Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003



The Concert Series welcomes volunteers to help with ushering, receptions, and other activities.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact either of the Concert Series Co-Managers:

Janice Genevro (202-543-2092) or Bobby Thigpen (202-546-4333).



We look forward to seeing you at the concerts in 2002!

SHARING SOME PERSONAL POEMS -- BY ALPINE BIRD

For some reason, reading the Oct. 11 letter from the Christian education program made me want to share some personal poems with my old St. Mark's community.

I had been taking a long-distance course for health care practitioners, consisting mostly of nurses, therapists and social workers, structured to increase awareness of how patients'/clients' non-medical concerns may affect their medical condition. In addition to regular assignments, we were instructed to journal, draw weekly pictures of how we felt, and every few weeks to write a poem which would begin "If my soul could speak to me today, it would say..." I started to send only the third and last poem, but I find the progression of the three interesting. Even more interesting to me was how they really were messages I needed to hear right then and how the process of writing them in rhyme (something I did not think I could do) helped etch them into my awareness so that I could draw on them later as needed. Originally during one of the weeks when we were together as a group, we were given the same assignment with a limited time to do it. I was unsuccessful then, but I was amazed at what people managed to write, as were they - so I expect many people would be surprised by what they would write if they were to ask themselves that question and allow themselves the time to struggle to answer it in an unfamiliar way.

August 18, 2001

**If my soul could speak to me today,
it would say, "Relax and Play.**

Take your time to Look and See,
to Listen and to Feel and Be...
to be alive to Here and Now,
letting go the fear of How.

How to do what can't be done?
Just take a step and make it fun:
Learn to fall with grace and
pleasure;
"Feel your ground and take your
measure.

Step again with more assurance,
knowing that there's no insurance,
but that, once the fear's subsided,
the tools they seem to be provided.

So do the best that you can do
while to your core remaining
true."

August 26, 2001

**If my soul could speak to me
today, it would say:**

Feel the loving touch within you.
Remember now its healing power
as your cells reached toward its light,
sensing warmth within their night.

Feel the touch so firm and gentle
that melts resistance, loosens fear
knotted in forgotten memories
only now becoming clear.

Feel the touch of life and dreams
that soothes and laughs and fills you
full,
or lights your fire and brings up pas-
sion
'till the knots release their tension in
your sense of joy fulfilled.

Feel the touch of God within you.
Feel the need within each cell.
Feel the loneliness around you,
Feel others' fear of their own hell.

Hold that touch and listen closely.
Send that touch across the gap.
You will find it leads you forward
through the darkness with no map.

Touch the truth as best you can,
knowing that it's just one view,
knowing that your tools are ample
if you follow Christ's example
not to prove that you are worthy,
but to live the love that's you.

September 18, 2001

(one week after the terrorist attack
on the World Trade Center and
the Pentagon)

Frantic deadlines to be met;
e-mails read and faxes sent;
cars in traffic, tempers stalling,
AC running, cell phones calling.

All using energy without think-
ing in their race to keep from
sinking, or to sample dreams of
leisure filled with luxury and
pleasure. . .

A plane explodes within a tower
as foreign terror shows its power
to use our system as an answer
to attack within us like a cancer.

As suspended deadlines languish,
and our country reels in anguish,
I sense the hurt and feel the sor-
row and I fear about tomorrow.

Can the dream be reinstated
now its defense has been negated?

**If my soul could speak to me
today, it would say:**

Remember as you resurrect it,
that near and far you're all con-
nected.

Sometimes cancer grows from
pain, and monsters often do the
same.

Those who feel their hands are
tied, their needs dismissed, their
truths denied can do the same to
you, you see, and keep you thus
from being free.

So feel the hurt and feel the
anger;
be alert to the new Danger.

But keep your feet upon your
ground despite emotion all
around,

Keep your self from being driv-
en.
Use the tools that you've been
given to face your challenges at
home from those you know and
call your own.

When old patterns reappear
and pride reacts based on old
fear; hear the edge within your
voice. Remember that you have
a choice to bite your tongue and
change the rhythm, to feel the
needs beneath the schism.

Protect yourself with shield of
love and rainbow colors from
above. Then listen closely. Lend
your ear to what pride and
shame don't want to hear.

Feel your ground and take your
measure. Say a prayer and
show your pleasure to have
another's point of view and help
and love to see it through.

Keep your balance and your
bearing. Hold the beacon of
your caring. Then find your
voice and let it surface. Let your
findings give it purpose.

Speak your truth without pre-
tense. Without the postures of
defense. For to your core you
must stay true to live the love you
feel is you

and bring the fear of hidden
might into understanding light.

CRABBINESS REIGNS... PETER EVELETH ASSUMES CROWN

BY JANICE GREGORY

The parish hall was filled with the sounds of cracking, hammering, lip smacking, and a loud din of conversation on August 19 for St. Mark's annual Fourth of July Crab Feast (generally held in August when the crabs and corn are better). The feast followed the solemn side-stepping procession of the reigning and former crabs of the year at the 10 o'clock summer service, where the crab banner hanging on the pulpit harmonized with Stephanie's grand sermon on truth-telling.

All nominations for crab of the year (and there were plenty this year) are offered in love and respect for those among us bold enough to speak our truths regardless of the prevailing views.

For those of you unfortunately away and unable to attend, following are 2000 Reigning Crab Janice Gregory's "state of crabbiness" speech as well as the nominations compiled jointly by the College of Crustaceans and winner for Crab of the Year 2001.

STATE OF CRABBINESS - 2001

Lest anyone think that they are safe from crabbiness - or safe in their crabbiness - let me remind you that last summer I was happily bicycling in the Yorkshire Dales, far away from Washington D.C., and I was STILL elected crab of the year.

I viewed this as a great honor. But because I was not here in person I have been robbed of my crowning moment of glory on crab Sunday - a complaint I am condemned to carry with me forever.

Despite this imposed handicap, I have endeavored to live up to my role as reigning crab. And I take a few moments to comment on the state of crabbiness in our parish.

I am pleased to report that crabbiness flourishes. As the individual nominations will soon show, many of us continue to march on in a sidewise crabby style. But what I want to comment on is a new level of crabbiness - CORPORATE CRABBINESS - crabbiness so endemic to the fabric of our community that it infuses all who touch it. The "Everyone's Wrong" award goes to the St. Mark's e-mail system - where I defy any of us who have used it to declare truthfully that we have never, not once, complained - whether on line or off line.

In addition, I PREDICT that in the future we will see increasing crabbiness about the sincere flourishes with which the liturgy is presented each Sunday in church by clergy and lay alike. Let's face it - beautiful it is; magic

it is not. Thank God for the painted column, which has diverted us to more rational discourse in the Nave.

Finally I take note of some crabby people who have crabbed about crabbing. I sympathize with these fine folks - but I point out that they are misdirected. If we want to look for crabbiness, we have to go no further than our own Biblical tradition. Consider Moses - faced with a labor dispute, he responded with seven plagues! Now THAT's crabby!

And how about Samson? He wiped out 10,000 people with a jawbone, and then, just because someone gave him a haircut, he brought down the whole temple. Now THAT's crabby!



(photo courtesy of Larry Cardwell)

Janice announcing Crab of the Year 2001

How could we forget Job - the king of crabs.

And even our Lord, who, when he saw this big crowd coming, just got into a boat and went elsewhere. Now THAT's crabby.

So we are right to celebrate crabbiness. Those who feel uncomfortable I see as soft shell crabs. We standing here are hard shell crabs. There's really not much difference, for we both get boiled and eaten.

CRAB OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS -- 2001

-- We dedicate our proceedings today to Ellsworth Naill, a Founding Father of the College of Crustaceans and Crab of the Year 1977 who died earlier this month. We remember Ellsworth for numerous crabby deeds, but particularly for blowing the whistle on skinny dipping at Shrinemont and almost with his very last breath continuing to claim that he was just protecting St. Mark's reputation from the scolds of the conservative Diocese of Virginia. He will be missed.

-- The "Do As I Say" nomination goes to Rector Paul Abernathy for urging the rest of us to keep our announcements short and then turning around and . . . well . . . you know what he does.

-- While we're on the subject, our "Hypocrisy Unmasked" Special Recognition Certificate goes to Associate Rector Stephanie Nagley for calling the Rector on his verbosity with a perfectly-timed: "That's not short." Way to go, Stephanie!

Shrinemont never fails to produce grist for our mill:

--Susan Kuhn walks off with our "Nothing But Net" award for calling on the St. Mark's e-mailers to blow off the Friday evening session of Shrinemont to watch the NBA play-off game.

--The "Episcopalians Don't Do That Sort of Thing" Bronze Star for Bravery is, of course, Johanna Reeder's for her provocative Saturday performance in coconut bra and grass skirt. Oh, Johanna, Johanna . . .

-- Margy Love gets a "Faulkner was not the only long-winded writer" nod for her nomination of Linda LaScola: to wit...

(The following read without taking a breath until shut off in mid-sentence...)

"I would like to nominate Linda LaScola for Crab of the Year for her extremely crabby decision a month or so ago to pursue a public discussion of the commercial use of the St. Marks e-groups, even though the particular message that raised this issue was posted by the rector's wife.....After initially raising it privately without satisfaction, she raised it on the e-list (at the suggestion of the senior warden I believe), and was met with a barrage of criticism for hurting Pontheolla's feelings. Nobody dared to publicly defend what she had done (including, I am ashamed to say, me), even though she had raised an important substantive issue, had not been mean in the slightest, and had simply told the truth in what we are taught is good and faithful St. Mark's style....It seemed that her having done so in the context of an episode involving Pontheolla put her beyond the pale. I think it was both courageous and principled (if indisputably risky) for Linda to court criticism in pursuing an issue of principle about which she felt strongly, and she was certainly criticized, and publicly too...It is the mark of a true crab to be undeterred in telling the truth by the prospect of unpopularity in the community..... And....."

BY JANICE GREGORY

In the Leading the Way Category:

-- We want to elevate Domestic Unions - the two we had this summer were over-the-top extravaganza's completely overshadowing any conventional weddings we have ever seen at St. Mark's (except, possibly, Winnie and Don Mosher's).

-- Shelly Web and Jen Lloyd for taking us at our word and pioneering our first domestic union.

-- Ron Kolanowski and Art Engler for finally making a commitment after 20 years of being a committed couple. And what a wedding - er, Blessing -- that was!

Christian Education never fails to generate nominations and this year is no exception.

-- ML Wagner is nominated as the Co-Director most likely to vent audibly about the sad state of Sunday School teachers.

-- The Confirmation Class (oops - we now call it - Life, Community and Faith) Review Team Co-Chairs Carol Blakeslee Collin and Pete Eveleth have now gone the Sign Committee one better. This "Cleaning out Penniman's Stygian Stables" duo run a committee that issues a river of reports, revisions, drafts, white papers, email circular, notices and manuals but never seems to come to an end.

We turn next to our "Seen on Sunday Morning" category.

--Stephanie Negley captured our "Blondes Have More Fun" award because we had to ask ourselves one Sunday: "Who is that woman in the Associate Rector's chair?"

--As we were looking at the blonde, we noticed that one of the pillars in the nave looked kind of funny, not like the other pillars. Then we realized it was paint, three different colors of paint--Jordan Almond colors, sort of. So today, Betty Foster gets the nod for an "Unusual Contribution...but is it Art?" citation.

--Hats off to acolyte Theo Rutherford (the tall one) for bearing the cross above a lot of green hair. Good job, Theo.

--Our "Let's Get This Right" nomination goes to our resident historian, Bert Cooper, for questioning the propriety of painted pillars and treating the egroups as a bully pulpit for a historical treatise about church art and architecture. But ... There's more -- Burt hit a double this year. Just last Sunday, he took it upon himself to instruct the worshipers in his row on the correct way to pass the peace.

There are two nominations in the "Verger Knows Best" category:

--David Deutsch wields his wand with authority and panache.

--Victoria Solsberry's dextrous manipulation of the incense pot brings pomp and circumstance to a service, without decapitating anyone, so far.

-- We nominate the Reverend Joshua Louw of South Africa and Taylor Adams, jointly. After Rev. Louw preached a sermon on unconditional love, Taylor rose to say that he had not been able to understand most of what had been said because Rev. Louw had not articulated clearly. Rev. Louw replied: "We're in the same boat." We give them our "Love Boat" nomination.

-- The "Phantom of the Organ" nomination goes to Andrew Malcolm who shows up at St. Mark's every year just in time for the Crab Feast.

-- Charlie Rupp gets the "Art Siebens Memorial Announcement Award - one of our perennial favorites" - for proposing to cut announcements short by simply cutting off the mike.

-- Bob Ewald gets the a "Curmudgeon of the Pub" Nomination for putting the Pub's refrigerator under chain and lock to hamper those who might even think of helping themselves to a free Seven-Up.

-- Senior Warden George Meng is a double winner this year: the "Who's In Charge Here" leadership citation and our "In the Loop" award of merit. Such extraordinary recognition accrues to George from his abortive attempt to control of the College of Crustaceans. The Senior Warden told us to avoid the heat and the flies by moving the Crab Feast to December, apparently unaware that the Feast had not been held outside for several years.

And before we turn to naming our Crab of the Year, the College wants to make mention of a few salient trends in crabdom.

-- We detect a creeping sense of uptightness among members of the congregation. Some folks seem to be taking themselves far too seriously.

-- And we are worried about our younger members who seem so busy creating progeny few of them can be considered crabby. We were, however, heartened when we heard that one younger parishioner, who attends the 9 o'clock service, openly complained that there were too many babies at that service and it was getting in the way of worship. Now that's promising....

AND NOW... THE MOMENT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR.... **CRAB OF THE YEAR!**

Our nominee deserves the ultimate award for sustained crabby performance for some thirty years at St. Mark's. Just to give you a sense of the man, as Junior Warden years ago, he was called to the scene of a disaster: a large pot of soup had been spilled on the stairs, creating a safety hazard and a glutinous mess. A young woman parishioner said to our nominee: "Aren't you going to clean this up? You're the Junior Warden." He replied: "You're a parishioner, why the hell don't you clean it up?" Here was a man destined for great things.

Our nominee later served as Senior Warden, as a stalwart of the Christian Education program (how many Confirmation Classes has he taught?), as an actor in Players Productions (oye vey - what a Rabbi!), and a preacher of long - very long -- sermons, and in other

important capacities too numerous to mention. And now he is being called to the College of Crustaceans because he always says just what thinks, even -- especially -- when he is wrong.

We give you the Crab of the Year 2001:

Peter Eveleth.



(photo courtesy of Larry Cardwell)

OUTREACH AT ST. MARKS: EVOLVING TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE WORLD AROUND US

BY JULIE MURPHY, CO-CHAIR OF THE OUTREACH BOARD

Among the many pleasures of the holiday season is the process of giving -- the anticipation of a smile, the knowledge that one we love and care for has received a cherished item, the quiet assurance that we are blessed to be able to share what we have.

One way in which we share what we have at St. Mark's is through our outreach program. During the month of December, there will be several opportunities to serve those in need: on the second Sunday, you can join a group of fellow parishioners at the Church of the Brethren Soup Kitchen to prepare a meal for the homeless. On the third Saturday, an outing with several young people from the Potomac Gardens Housing Project will be planned: new, enthusiastic volunteers are welcome. Also, on the fourth Sunday, 150 meals for the homeless will be assembled in the parish hall as a part of the Salvation Army Grate Patrol.

All of these programs and several others are a vital part of the ongoing revitalization of social ministry here at St. Mark's. One of the most exciting developments within outreach has been our effort to build relationships with our Capitol Hill neighbors. For the past two years, we have sent 20 children to the For Love of Children camp, giving them a valuable life experience. We hope to begin a program of computer training for adults at Capper/Carrolsburg housing project in the near term, a program which could make a real difference in the lives of those looking for work in a troubled economy.

We have also launched an intensive program of racial reconciliation. A group of committed parishioners has presented the film "The Color of Fear" to the parish and has plans to have more of us see this provocative presentation and to discuss it. We want to continue to support this process of pondering our lives and our actions in a world where dispossession and discrimination seem ever present.

Another challenge for outreach this year has been providing opportunities for service to our youth and integrating that experience with reflection in Sunday School. In early November, thirty adults and children marched around the block in support of the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless walk, raising over \$2,000. Earlier that morning, many of the children had discussed poverty and homelessness in their Sunday School classes.

In the months to come, we hope to continue these efforts. Both a service project and an opportunity for discussion are planned for elementary-age children on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Also, the teens will be participating in a 30-hour fast to raise awareness of world hunger in February. For the adults, many of whom are already stretched with work, family and parish commitments, we hope to plan one-shot days with groups like Habitat for Humanity.

Christmas and giving, a battered twosome, a weary cliché. Yet somehow, this year in particular, it seems fitting to think of others as we wrap and shop and to find ways to embrace our common vulnerability and essential humanity. †

*A friendly universe
gazes approvingly on the infant,
whereas a loving universe
holds it.*

*- Morris Berman
(submitted by Jerry McKenzie)*

Comments at Sermon Seminar following Rev. Benjamin Pratt's October 14 sermon included a challenge from Jane Jacobsen that we at St. Mark's state that what we do believe rather than what we do not believe. While being clear and vocal about what one does not believe often, in fact, clarifies one's position for both the speaker and the hearer, I have decided to take up Jane's challenge. Following is a statement to my faith community of what I do believe.

I believe it is likely that those who say the death of a loved one or some other personal tragedy is "OK" because the loved one is "with God" or because the tragedy somehow fulfills God's purpose are expressing a denial of their pain more than they are expressing any faith in God. I believe instead in a God who suffers with wounded souls in their anguish and who holds close the sorrowful as they grieve.

From this statement, one may accurately deduce that I believe in a God who co-exists with the free will of his creatures and with the events of earthly life - a God who continually beckons us to love but who does not control the actions we take toward our fellow humans or stop nature's course in her tracks.

I accept the existence of both tragedy and evil. When I think of God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer, I envision the continuing miracle of new life that rises out of the ashes of such an existence. I think often about the statistical improbability that I personally should exist at all, and I believe that we begin to understand our own existence only when we approach it in wonder that it is there at all.

I believe that when I die I will cease to exist. I recognize that I could be wrong and that some form of resurrection, immortality, or reincarnation awaits me, but I don't bank on it. In fact, I believe that organized religion's frequent focus on an afterlife is a distraction from real life, a distortion of the message of God's love, and sometimes dangerous for ourselves and others.

This belief probably requires a little explanation:

First, I believe in a God who embraces and loves me as I am, here and now, and I believe that I don't need to attain some sort of perfection to be whole in the eyes and embrace of God. I believe my completeness is in God's love, not in any one thing that I am or do. This, for me, is the distinction between salvation and self-justification. Second, when the focus is on an afterlife rather than this life, in my experience a couple of tendencies seem consistently to arise. Some people get fixated on doing "the right thing" so that they can get their "reward" later. This can take many different forms, including in its most pathological form blowing up 5,000 people. But even acts of kindness, when performed for the "reward," seem to me to miss the point. Other people hate themselves because they are far from that perfect mark that only will be attainable in the afterlife. The deleterious effects of this self-loathing are legion.

I believe that the love and acceptance of God, called the Kingdom of God, is here and now - not in some distant time or other world.

I recognize that my beliefs may not sit well with some "believers," and I am always astounded how insistent some people are that my beliefs match theirs. Perhaps that is one reason that it is easier to connect with others on the basis of our pain, our empty places, and our unbelief. These are more universal and not so easily judgmental.

This is where I am today, but I may be someplace else tomorrow. As my beliefs grow and change, however, they are unlikely to be moved by someone trying to persuade me of the rightness of his/her position. Except when I see people causing themselves and others unnecessary pain, what others believe does not matter that much to me. What matters to me is how I treat them and how they treat me. This is called the primacy of orthopraxy over orthodoxy. It is the belief that it is primarily in our actions rather than in what we profess to believe that God lives and works. Nevertheless, I thank you, Jane, for your challenge, for it is also important to examine my foundations, and you have provided me an opportunity to do so. †

"RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAGS!"

BY DON MOSHER



Since the atrocities of September 11, the United States flag has been widely displayed as a symbol of our solidarity and collective determination to oppose evil. Members of St. Mark's have responded with a request to resume displaying the flags of our church and our country, using the twin sockets located high on the side walls of the chancel/choir area behind the rood screen. From 1911 until about the 1970's the U.S. flag was the Episcopal flag hung opposite each other there in the chancel. Being faded and dusty, they were taken down and never replaced.

Flags are widely used in churches. Many English cathedrals and churches, own National Cathedral and most parish churches regularly display them. St. Mark's sets aside one day each year for displaying class and organization flags on Banner Sunday.

Aesthetic considerations favor replacing the chancel flags. The chancels space I high and relatively small in floor area. Flags mounted part way up the side walls would break up the disproportionate verticality. The space has only hard surfaces (brick, tile, stone) and would be softened by the contrasting texture of cloth. Except for the mosaic floor and the very high small stained glass windows the area has nearly monochrome coloration in shades of brick and reddish stone. The banners would add a refreshing element of color. Fortunately, the U.S. and Episcopal flags are already color-coordinated. Both are red, white and blue.

One or two people have expressed concern that displaying our flags might appear too nationalistic, sectarian or even idolatrous. The United States flag symbolizes our life together under the aegis of our chosen form of representative government which enables us to

believe, as we will, to worship according to our beliefs and to think, speak and act according to our consciences. The Episcopal flag signifies our fellowship, shared purpose and commonality of belief and liturgy with our Episcopalians. Any notion that flags in the chancel, because they are symbols, would promote idolatry is groundless. Burning candles on the altar and lighting a ceremonial flame at the Great Vigil of Easter, however powerfully symbolic, has not made us fire worshipers. The cascade of origami birds which has beautified the central altar space for six months has put us in no danger of become apostate, animistic, bid-worshipping pagans.

Replacing the missing flags will involve no drain on the church budget. Donors have already volunteered sufficient funds to provide flags, poles and finials of excellent quality.

In summary, tradition, historic preservation, aesthetics and inclusive symbolism all favor displaying the Episcopal and United States flags in our chancel. The Vestry has voted to institute a process to confirm how much membership support there is for this or other projects involving change in church furnishings or décor. You can help "Rally 'round the flag(s)!" by adding your name to the petition asking the Vestry to replace the flags where they historically belong. Leave a voice message at (202) 547-6213 or (703) 280-5418 or an email message at alban@erols.com or wjervis966@aol.com. To sign the petition in person, see Marlies Jervis or Neal Gregory at the 9:00 o'clock service or Don Mosher or Doris Burton at the 11:00 o'clock service. †

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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We welcome contributions on any
aspect of parish life by members of
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Send contributions to the Editor by
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