



# THE GOSPEL

*According to Saint Mark's / December 2003*

## A Letter from the Rector

MY DEAR COMMUNITY:

I have been your rector for 51/2 years. I have come to know you — indeed, us — as a community whose corporate life and individual lives I love and respect.

In that love and respect, I share with you what I'm thinking and feeling. I want to change my focus — being more people centered and less meeting oriented.

Throughout 26 years of ordained ministry, covering 5 positions, each time I have moved to a larger congregation. Progressively, by necessity, I have functioned more as a manager and less as a pastor. Increasingly, my *people contact* has come via meetings and less in one-on-one or small group engagement with members and newcomers. Some 15 years ago, I devoted much time and energy to these activities. They were important not only for community building, but also for establishing personal, pastoral relationships.

Today, for several reasons, I see a need to do that at St. Mark's. Over the past few years, concerns have been expressed about our losing membership. Actually, our numbers are steady. Nevertheless, I do believe that growth would be a good thing. I've also heard that some people feel disconnected and, at times,

disaffected from St. Mark's.

I've heard, too, that the annual fall financial canvass is one of the few times parishioners are asked, "*How are you in relation to St. Mark's?*"

Now, I don't believe that my greater emphasis on connecting with people will address, much less solve any or all of these concerns, but I think it will help. Moreover, we are blessed to have exceedingly able lay leaders, who function in a variety of roles, and a capable staff. I have such high confidence in them that I believe I can absent myself from a variety of meetings and still be kept in the loop. This will allow me the space and time to rechannel my energies.

There are two other reasons I want to refocus my efforts. First, preachers are fed not only by their knowledge of *Continued on p. 2*

## INSIDE

Stewardship	2
The Verger and the Verge	2
From Runaway Teens to the Founding Fathers	3
2004 Honduras Youth Trip	3
Vestry Mouse Report	4
Centennial Reflections	4
Mending the Fabric	5

### *Christmas Season Schedule of Services at St. Mark's 2003*

**Wednesday, December 24 Christmas Eve**

4:00 pm Family Holy Eucharist with Pageant

7:40 pm Brass Ensemble

Nursery Care from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

8:00 pm Festival Eucharist

10:40 pm Brass Ensemble

11:00 pm Festival Eucharist (with incense)

**Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day**

10 am only

**Sunday, December 28**

Lessons and Carols, 10 am only

**Sunday, January 4**

Morning Prayer 10 am only

## CANVASS STRAGGLERS ONWARD!!!

As we go to press, there are still a number of St. Mark's members who have not sent in their pledges. This is important because:

The vestry will call every non-pledging St. Mark's family during the first week in December. **YOU CAN AVOID THIS CALL BY PLEDGING TODAY.** Surely you have better things to do next week than talk to us!

The vestry meets to review the budget for 2004 on December 14. That budget review is based on the canvass results as of the day before. If we don't have enough, the cutting begins.

On January 15, 2004 the budget is finalized. Last year, over 25 pledges came in between mid-January and the end of April. We're grateful for all pledges, but these were too late to impact the budget.

Things are moving at St. Mark's, but we need *everyone* who cares about our church community to pitch in and pledge. Whatever amount you are comfortable with will be fine with us. Just fill out the form (it's simpler this year) and drop it in the plate, the pledge pillar, or the mail. You can also e-mail it to Susan Block at [stmpadm@covad.net](mailto:stmpadm@covad.net). **We thank you very much.** † – Penny Hansen, Senior Warden



Continued from p. 1

2

December 2003

life and Scripture, but through an ongoing engagement with their communities, which requires regular contact and deep conversation. Secondly, I enjoy being with people — talking and listening, giving and receiving, sharing and learning.

I have shared all of this with my wife, Ponthoella; Penny Hansen, our Senior Warden; the Vestry; my Rector's Advisory Committee; the St. Mark's staff; and some of you, asking for input. Now, my dear St. Mark's community, I ask for your support.

At this moment, I'm not entirely sure what this change in focus looks like — and it will take time — but please don't be surprised if I call you and invite you to coffee or lunch or invite you with other parishioners to Ponthoella's and my home for a meal and conversation or call upon you at your worksite or simply call to chat on the telephone or...who knows...

*Love and Peace, Paul †*

## A Stewardship Thought

by Gene Kendall

"Enough...enough...how much is enough?" This is NOT normally one of the questions that comes up during the church canvas. We are more familiar with the question of "how much of my time, talent and resources shall I give?" but not "how much is enough?" The question is a more powerful question, radical even, because it challenges us to think beyond the scope of *Portion* (how much), towards the larger scope of *Proportion* (what percentage I give back of what I receive). As you think about what you get and how much you give back, be it to God, to the church, to humanity, whatever your frame of reference, how would you answer the question, "How much is enough?" Something to think about, not only during the canvass, but throughout the year. †

# The Verger and the Verge

by David Deutsch

"Paul, we present with these verges to be set apart for the service of this church." If you were at St. Mark's on Sunday, October 26, you heard those very words from our vergers. And almost simultaneously many of you thought these very words, "What the hell is a verge"? Let me explain.

The word verge comes from the Latin *virga*, meaning stick or staff carried by a person of authority. This concept goes back to the Roman fasces, an insignia of official authority in ancient Rome, carried in imperial processions.

By the Middle Ages, scholastic, legal and religious dignitaries were escorted in processions by a person carrying a verge. (Today, at graduations, you can see the faculty escorted by a senior faculty member carrying a mace or verge.) Religious processions would often begin outside the cathedral. Escorting the attending clergy and bishop, the verger cleared the way through the rabble with his verge.

The practice of escorting clergy and dignitaries continues today. Cathedrals can be very intimidating places. Ceremonies can be complicated. The clergy are often visitors. Hence, the role of the verger is to escort, cue and generally act as production stage managers. Note that the verger does not lead the procession but escorts the clergy. In fact, on certain Sundays we are processed in by our wardens, carrying...a staff!

The ceremonial role of the verger is only a fraction of the verger's duties, albeit a highly visible one. At St. Mark's,

as at an increasing number of parish churches, the verger's role is rarely ceremonial. The title "stage manager" is truly apt. Hence a verge is rarely seen. But now we have these two beautiful verges, one simple and elegant, crafted by our Lynda Smith-Bugge; the other ornate and traditional, fashioned by Lichfield artist Don Crocker.

Wouldn't it be disappointing if these two beautiful handmade liturgical objects were simply put away in the sacristy never to serve our church by glorifying God and honoring our friendship between St. Mark's and Lichfield Cathedral? So, at Paul's suggestion, on certain High Feast Days (for example, Palm Sunday or Christmas Eve), one of the vergers will carry one of the verges.

So, when you see one of your vergers processing the clergy into the nave, vested in the traditional garb of a black cassock, do not think St. Mark's is veering toward high Anglican folderol. Do not think that our clergy suddenly needs pomp and circumstance added to their lives. And do not think that a purely ceremonial liturgy is unfolding. Instead, remember the conclusion of that presentation ceremony when we all prayed:

*Almighty God, we thank you that you have put it into the hearts of Your people to make offerings for your service... Be with us now and bless us as we set apart these verges to Your praise and glory; and in honor of the friendship between St. Mark's Church and Lichfield Cathedral; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen †*

### St. Mark's Yoga Center

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Thurs 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
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# Do you **From Runaway Teens to the Founding Fathers**

by *Rick Hayes and Pamela Blumgart*

know someone who found St. Mark's through theater? The shows the St. Mark's Players put on every year attract theater-goers from around the Washington area to our church. They come to see a show, often to see a friend or relative perform, but many of them ask about the building and the congregation that calls it home.

This fall the St. Mark's Players launched a challenging season of three ensemble shows. *Runaways*, our season opener, ran on weekends November 7-22. The musical, directed by SMP veteran Kevin Sockwell, addressed why young people run away from their homes and families, what happens when they do, and why a young person executes such a desperate act. The show was chock-a-block with young talent and received great reviews from everyone who saw it.

Our second show is a popular one. *Steel Magnolias* is about six women who meet often at Truvy's beauty parlor. This

production has "laughter through tears," great heart and characters to remember. Jessie Marshall, director of last season's *Driving Miss Daisy*, is again at the helm. The production differs from the popular movie by having an all female cast. Auditions will be held December 13 (1-4 pm) and December 15 (7-10 pm) with cold readings from the script. The show will run March 5-20.

The spring musical is a classic—*1776*. Twenty of our founding fathers (supported by two founding mothers) struggle to deal with the birth pangs of a new country. Humor and drama go hand in hand in this historically based production. Several excellent roles are available for men and women. Newcomer Jeff Breslow directs and Players' founding members Ellen and Larry Cardwell are producing. The auditions are February 1 (2-5 pm) and February 2 (7-10 pm). The show will run April 30 through May 15.

All Players' productions are Friday and

Saturday at 8 pm and Sundays at 3 pm. Auditions are open to all church members, and opportunities to work backstage abound. Behind the scenes of every production are numerous people designing, building and painting sets; designing, sewing and unearthing costumes; selling advertisements; designing and operating lighting; designing and operating sound; setting up and taking down sets; and finding and managing props. The Players need and welcome the participation of church members and others in the community.

If you are interested in volunteering, becoming a member, or just want information, call 202-546-9670, visit our Web site and post a message at [www.stmarksplayers.org](http://www.stmarksplayers.org), or e-mail SMP secretary Pamela Blumgart at [pjblumgart@mail.com](mailto:pjblumgart@mail.com). In addition to the show-related tasks mentioned above, volunteer opportunities include producers, house managers, box office staff, play reading committee and director/producer

*Did you know that theater is an outreach activity of St. Mark's?*

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## Summer 2004 Honduras Youth Trip

*Hugh McElrath, Honduras committee co-chair (still looking for the other co-chair)*

Ever wonder who or what the "San Marcos cluster" is that we mention in the prayers of the people each Sunday? They are a group of parishes and missions on the northwest coast of Honduras—after Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. However poor in per capita GDP, the Hondurans are rich in smiles, bananas, coffee, cattle, world-class reef diving and magnificent Mayan and colonial ruins.

The St. Mark's Honduras committee is making initial plans to offer a youth service trip to Honduras, probably between June 27 and July 10. Teens, from rising ninth graders through seniors, are eligible to go. The group will probably stay at the Episcopal retreat center in Muchilena, share about a week of

work and fellowship with Honduran counterparts, worship at one of the churches on Sunday and enjoy two to three days of rest and recreation at a tourist destination. Individual trip cost will be around \$1,500 including airfare, maybe less.

The Wake Up the Earth fundraiser is scheduled for April 24. Proceeds are primarily to finance projects in Honduras and cover "overhead" expenses—but full or partial need-based scholarships could be made available.

*"Is it safe?"* — As some may know, we had to cancel our 2002 Honduras trip due to a spate of criminal incidents where members of church groups were robbed. John Quinn, a

*Continued on p 6*



# Highlights of the Nov. 16 Vestry Meeting

*From the Vestry Mouse (a.k.a., Raiford Gaffney)*

All were present except vestry members Stewart Andrews and new father David Dill, Register Rosemary Harold, and Manciple Charlie Rupp. Parish Administrator Susan Block also attended.

**Junior Warden's Report:** Jack Burton should get the "Mr. Clean" award. He's dealt with water problems, Baxter house basement renovation, carpet cleaning and restoration, and the nave. A special thanks to Rosemary Harold and Michael Knipe, who paid for the felt "feet" which have now been installed on all chairs and kneelers in the nave to protect our new floor, and to the worker bees who did the installation.

**2004 Canvass:** Michael Townsend gave a very informative report: by November 16, we had 286 pledges totaling \$684,222 towards a goal of \$800,000. This includes 12 new pledging units for \$15,550! Approximately 80 parishioners have yet to pledge. From this group Michael expects another \$100,000. The vestry will consider only pledges received before its December 14 meeting to review the proposed 2004 budget.

**Treasurer's Report:** We're in good shape with a positive cash flow in October of \$12,800 and a negative year-to-date cash flow of \$56,284, which David Willson reports should be more than offset by positive cash flows for the remainder of the year.

**Finance/Budget Activities:** The Finance Committee has met twice and expects to meet three more times to prepare a proposed 2004 budget for the December 14 vestry meeting.

**Associate/Assistant Rector Search:** Search Committee Co-Chair Jane Rutherford reported that 3 candidates from a pool of 72 at the national level will visit St. Mark's in December. Two more may follow. Right now, we're hoping for a new Associate or Assistant Rector around February.

**Cradle to College Council:** Co-convenor Stan Smith discussed the recent St. Mark's youth retreat and upcoming activities. The teens are instituting a First Friday Film at Baxter House, and the

middle schoolers are considering a Diocesan Middle School Retreat on March 5-7. Youth 14 and above are interested in resuming the biennial Honduras Trip in 2004.

**2004 Honduras Trip:** Honduras Committee Co-chair Hugh McElrath discussed St. Mark's 13-year relationship with Honduras. The committee is planning the 2004 youth trip for June 27-July 10 with recruitment and selection of adult trip leaders an urgent requirement. Please volunteer for this important program — a go/no-go decision will be made by the third week of January. Special thanks to Collie and Betsy Agle for returning from emeritus status to help.

**Panel on Children/Youth Programs:** Penny Hansen called this panel to discuss these important programs.

**Children's Choirs:** Parishioner and parent Leslie Allen reported that children's choir rehearsals moved to Sundays at 9 am at the request of parents. She hopes for a core of six to eight children. †

## St. Mark's in 1903: Some Centennial Reflections

*by Bert Cooper, Parish Historian*



Jean Davenport Lander

THERE WERE THREE NOTABLE EVENTS IN OUR PARISH HISTORY during 1903: the first issue of *St. Mark's Parish News*, a four-page printed newsletter published nine times a year; our first "Hanging of the Greens" at Christmas; and the death of Jean Davenport Lander, who gave us the Tiffany window when the church was built in 1888.

*St. Mark's Parish News* continued for many years in various formats, and its successor in 1961, *The Gospel According to St. Mark's*, carried this venerable name as its subtitle. Thanks to the survival of most issues of our *Parish News* from 1903 to 1913, we know more about the life of the parish in the early 1900s than in later years, when even the vestry minutes are often missing.

The January 1904 issue of the *Parish News* reported: "The effective scheme of Christmas decorations of the church this year [1903] was due to the skill and



# Mending the Fabric *by Jack Burton, Jr. Warden*

## Repairs:

- Boilers are now up and running after major repairs.
- Waterproofing work in Baxter House basement is complete; donated carpet is in place; and the teens are back in their space.
- Major clean-up of basement file storage has begun with sorting, filing and trashing; area slated for removal of its asbestos tile next summer; following that, we hope to recarpet or retile the entire basement.
- In the church building, water has been a problem all summer and fall: the drains in the undercroft backed up; two pipes burst; small foundation leaks occurred in nursery and library areas. We've made enough headway so that the carpets throughout the church and Baxter House were shampooed.
- Flooding in a corner of the nave during a recent storm due to blocked gutters, thankfully mopped up by the cast of "Runaways."
- Chairs and kneelers all now have felt feet. Please continue to be careful

when moving furniture, but this has already helped.

- Broken chairs and kneelers have been repaired and are back in service, BUT we will soon need to begin replacing them.
- Chapel is clear of "stuff" and swept; more inviting for Contemplative Prayer and other small groups.

## To Do Items:

- *Columbarium planning continues*; to be located in chapel; awaiting information on costs and hope to start work fairly soon. Watch for an announcement on a preconstruction sale of spaces.
- *And then there's the tower...* Within the next month, we will have a report from the architect and engineer giving us a detailed description of the actual deterioration. Using that report we will get an independent estimate of the work needed. Early next year, we expect to have a figure to present to you.
- *And rumors about the tower...* I understand lots of rumors are circulating about the tower. "They're going

to remove it rather than repair it," for example.

While that is something we've asked the team to consider and price, no one has agreed as yet that this is an appropriate course of action. The vestry simply felt it wise to examine all options in preparation for a parish-wide meeting.

Even if the parish made this choice, because we are an historic church in an historic district, we would have to persuade the Historic Preservation Office and the Fine Arts Commission that removal is a necessity before we could obtain the required permits. Should we fail to convince them, as I'm told is most likely, we must recognize the costs of going to court and the possibility of losing. This would cause a serious delay in making the repairs and result in legal costs on top of the repair costs.

Please...as you hear rumors call or e-mail me with questions. While much is still unknown, we do have some of it in hand and will come to you with the whole story when all our questions are answered. †

experience as a builder of Mr. Melvin Herriman," a vestryman who, for many years, was in charge of this annual event. Elizabeth Harrell, whose drawing of the church is on the Sunday bulletin, wrote in the December 1963 issue: "Since 1954 the hanging of the greens has been an important part of preparation and worship at St Mark's at Christmas." Calling for the help of "many with nimble feet and fingers," she asked that they "come prepared to work, because greens do not hang themselves."

Another notable event was the death on August 2, 1903, of Mrs. Lander, the donor of the large Tiffany window above the font. A member of St. Mark's from the 1870s, she was an English actress of some renown in America from the 1850s to the 1870s, when she moved to Capitol Hill. She was the widow of General Frederick Lander, U.S. Army, who was killed in 1862 during the Civil War. Then she operated a

hospital for Union soldiers in U.S.-occupied territory near Beaufort, S.C., before returning to the stage in 1865.

Mrs. Lander was probably the wealthiest and most socially prominent member of the parish in the 1880s. When the vestry asked her for a loan to build the church, her response was the Tiffany window. This 1888 Tiffany work is in marked contrast to the other windows in the nave, which were made by Mayer of Munich. Mayer's neo-medieval windows were then much more popular than Tiffany's innovative and avant-garde work, which would dominate American taste in stained glass after 1900. Later, Tiffany windows went out of style, until recent years when interest in his work revived. In this centennial year of Mrs. Lander's death, it seems appropriate to recall her magnificent gift to St. Mark's, one of the best examples of Louis C. Tiffany's early work—before he began making lamps from leftover bits of opalescent glass used in producing his many later works. †

## Honduras (Continued from p. 3)

worker and associate of our own Eileen Blumenthal, was tragically shot and killed in a confrontation with a local youth.

Since that time, the government has taken steps to improve security around the airport, St. Mark's members have traveled to Honduras on scouting trips and the Peace Corps has given clearance for its volunteers to live and work on the northwest coast. Dozens of church youth groups have traveled to Honduras in the last year and a half without serious mishap. We believe the current security situation there, while never perfect, to be a reasonable risk for a youth group.

**Call for adult trip leaders** - The long pole in the tent for a successful trip will be the adult leaders. They will need a combination of talents, including rapport with the youth. We also need a couple of Spanish speakers (or more!) and someone with local knowledge (perhaps a Honduran?). Come out, come out, whoever you are!

During the winter and spring, the "corps of discovery" will engage in several preparatory activities for team building, orientation and perhaps some survival Spanish.

St. Mark's has a 13- to 14-year history of partnership with Hondurans. It makes a tremendous difference to our Honduran brothers and sisters that we display a commitment

to keep coming back—that we're not just tourists. Demonstrating that human link is worth far more than whatever we may accomplish physically while we are on a service trip.

We plan an informational meeting for interested youth and parents. Come find out more, provide input to decisions and help make it happen! †

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—Advertisement

The pub notes recent trends in biblical interpretation and, in a nod to scriptural literalism, makes a standing offer is for the month of December. The offer to those of us who make lifestyle choices that are biblical abominations and accordingly should be stoned. The pub invites all to come to the pub to get stoned.\*

\*Picture IDs and proof of abomination required. Some restrictions apply.

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December 2003