



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, DC

MARCH 2003

Nits & Nats...

What's On The Minds of St. Marksians...

STRENGTHENING THE ST. MARK'S COMMUNICATION "SYSTEM"

BY PETER HAWLEY

VESTRY LIAISON FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Although I have not looked for etymological proof, I suspect that the roots of "communication" and "community" are intertwined. Certainly good communication in many forms is essential for a community to form in the first place and to function effectively.

At St. Mark's, we attempt to communicate with one another and with God by using a myriad of means, individually and collectively: voice, gesture, the written word, the arts, and both print and digital technologies. We gather for "communion" around the Eucharistic table, offer prayers both "silently and aloud," listen to sermons and share reflections on them, and engage in dialogue in countless formal and informal gatherings. We even take a pledge when joining this community to go to one another directly with our praise and our complaints, though most members would probably admit that we fall short of the mark on the latter part of this commitment.

These are all essential ways in which we seek "to understand, as well as to be

understood"-- both laudable goals for members of a faith community, it seems to me (with all due apologies to St. Francis). But most of these forms of communication are not the focus of this article. Instead, I would merely like to draw the community's attention to the systems we use for internal and external communication, to make a few recommendations, and to ask for parishioners to step forward and serve the community by taking responsibility for managing one or another of these systems.

The Gospel Newsletter

In the years before digital communications, the parish newsletter was the principal means of keeping members informed of parish activities. Not all members attend church every Sunday and see the announcements inserted into the bulletin; not all members even live in the metro area. But all receive The Gospel according to St. Mark's in the mail.

At the strategic planning meeting held on February 22, one table of parishioners

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Open Doors, Open Hearts:

A Perspective on Making Newcomers Welcome

BY STEVE EDMONDSON

One hallmark of our St. Mark's community is our desire to be open, welcoming, and inclusive. We act on this every Sunday, when we invite all present to share with us in God's love feast, the celebration of Jesus's Supper. We wish to be welcoming because we have a great gift of love, acceptance, and family to offer to a cold world where those values are too often neglected in deed, if not in word. And, indeed, we are a vibrant community, active not only in our outreach to one another, but also in our exploration of our lives with one another and with God.

Ironically, though, our very vibrancy can serve as a barrier to our efforts at welcoming the stranger. We are such a busy place that it is easy for those new among us to be passed over unnoticed, to be thrown to the fringes by our whirlwind of activity, rather than being sucked up into its heart -- into our hearts. The Hospitality committee at St. Mark's wants to challenge this dynamic and ask our community to work at actualizing this value of inclusion in a more pervasive way.

Our narrow task has been to establish structures that enable the welcoming and integration of those who are new into our community. A wonderful cadre of Greeters has come forward, folks familiar with our community who assist the Vestry Greeters in welcoming newcomers on Sunday mornings. We are holding newcomer social gatherings quarterly, to help those who are new to see this place not

simply as an activity center, but as gathering of friends and family. We are dove-tailing our efforts with Paul's and Stephanie's already effective ministry in this area, and we are seeking to coordinate our activities with the

large number of gateway opportunities already made available by Christian Ed, the Arts, Worship, Outreach, and our Youth Ministries.

But all of this, however effective it might be, does not get to heart of the matter. People come into our doors not to be greeted or integrated, but to be welcomed and known, and that is a task that cannot be delegated; it is the vocation of the entire community. Each of us, and all of us gathered, are essential to what St. Mark's has to offer to anyone who comes to us, and so each of us and all of us together have to make that offer. That is true hospitality -- the offer of self that knocks down the barrier between inside and outside. The Hospitality committee can provide hospitable structures, but only you can make this a hospitable community.

If you would like to know more about what you can do, please feel free to talk with the Hospitality Co-chairs, Robin Holiday (703-549-3884) and Stephen Edmondson (703-823-2776) or David Dill

(301-779-3455), our Vestry liaison. Better yet, find someone new on Sunday morning, and ask them what you can do. Or just ask them who they are, and then invite them for dinner to find out more. †





called for monthly production of the Gospel. Traditionally, however, the newsletter has been published on a bi-monthly basis. In 2002, budget constraints cut it back to four issues. This year, although the budget calls for producing six issues again, it has already had to absorb a late printing bill for one issue last December.

As any of the former editors can attest, production of each issue is not without its cost in human and financial resources. Despite what appears to be the zeal among many in our parish to speak out, editors often face a challenge in getting people to commit to writing articles. This is particularly true with respect to obtaining reports on major parish activities; the people overseeing those activities often find it difficult to both organize the events and write articles about them as well. On the production side, the editors often are unable to attract volunteer help with the labeling, sorting, distribution & bulk mailing chores -- tasks that take a tremendous amount of time when only one or two people do the work, but obviously can be done faster with more assistance.

Each issue also costs about \$500 to print and another \$90 to mail at bulk rates. Given the time-sensitive nature of the issue preceding the annual Parish Meeting (containing candidate statements), it is usually mailed first class, at a cost of \$360. Distribution of copies at church helps hold mailing costs down. Although each issue is now posted to the web site, there has not been a decrease in the print run. It has been suggested that we make a concerted effort to have all parishioners with e-mail receive the Gospel as an attached document or provide them with a web link reminder

whenever a new issue has been posted.

We are in need of a new editor. Michele Rivard, who has edited the last several issues, must step down due to the demands of caring for her infant son and re-entering the workforce. She is willing to continue as a copy editor, if someone will step forward and handle the solicitation of articles and overall production. Tracie Van Dorpe, who served for two years as editor, has graciously consented to handle the layout tasks for the next few issues until other arrangements can be made.

The Web Site

Thanks to hard work by Art Engler, Monica Mills, Linda Staheli, and Margot Leydic-Boyd, the parish web site (www.stmarks.net), has undergone a transformation in the last three years. Although the site receives approximately 1,000 hits each month, we do not know how many of these originate from parishioners versus other visitors. Nor, other than anecdotal comments received from 3-4 newcomers, do we know how many people discover St. Mark's by means of our site and are enticed to pay us a visit.

Starting with the redesign of the site in the spring of 2001, the church has contracted with Brian Gluckman as its web master. Brian lives on the Hill but attends All Soul's Episcopal Church in Northwest D.C. He also serves as web master for All Soul's and Grace Episcopal. Currently we are paying Brian \$4,000 a year to make graphic and structural changes to the site as needed and to post documents on a weekly basis. Parish Assistant Paulette House manages the flow of documents from Baxter House, including each week's sermon, worship bulletin, announcements, and calendar.

Our contract with Brian calls for all other documents to be funneled to him through a parish web editor or coordinator, so that he is not inundated with a myriad of separate requests. Margot served in this role till last August, when she handed work-in-progress over to me and prepared for her departure to Malawi. Having served as "interim" web editor ever since has given me a keen appreciation for both the web and Gospel editors' jobs. Although it is the responsibility of "Pillar" chairs and parish managers to keep their respective areas of the web site up to date, it is a

simple fact of life at St. Mark's that people are extremely busy. Thus, the web editor's role becomes one of pleading and cajoling, as well as working with the web master to figure out the best way to present information. Some areas of the site, such as Parish Life, simply have no designated content providers.

As interesting and informative as it has been to serve as web editor, I seek someone to take on this role for the coming year. Juggling Vestry duties plus the web (plus my "real" job) simply results in unfortunate lapses in web content that neither serve the members of this parish nor present an up-to-date picture of who we are to the wider world. At the same time, I urge all parish managers and others with content for the web to plan ahead and submit new material well in advance of its need rather than at the 11th hour.

E-group & Yahoo web site

Whereas the stmarks.net web site is available to the public, the site we have maintained (for free) at www.yahogroups.com since 1999 is accessible only to parishioners using a password of their own devising. Taking advantage of this service requires that the subscriber have an e-mail address and access to the Web.

Lee Ann Slayton and George Meng are the current moderators of the St. Mark's Yahoo Group site. The most frequent use of this site (by some 250 members) is the e-group, to which an individual may subscribe by sending an e-mail to stmarks@yahogroups.com. Subscribers may choose to receive all messages posted to the e-group individually or in a "daily digest." They also may opt not to receive either type of e-mail directly but instead go to the web site and scan all the messages that have been posted. When an e-mail message contains an attached document, the service automatically posts it to the yahoo.com web site. Individual e-mail recipients get such attachments directly. Those receiving the daily digest must go to the yahoo web site to retrieve them.

The e-group function of our "private" site on Yahoo is used frequently by parishioners. Less well known and used are the other services on the site, such as bulletin boards, topical "chat" rooms, calendars,

and even a mechanism for conducting polls. Various interests groups at St. Mark's might find some of these features quite handy for sharing information among their members. One suggestion for broadening the use of the church's private and public web sites is to hold occasional tutorials on a laptop, perhaps at pub brunch or pub lunch, to show parishioners how to access, navigate, and take full advantage of these sites. But while increasing the use of these technologies may enhance communications at St. Mark's and decrease some budget line items, we must remain vigilant against creating a "digital divide" that leaves in the dark those parishioners who may not have web or e-mail access at home or at work.

Community Relations

For the past several years, Keith Krueger has chaired St. Mark's "External Relations Committee" with assistance from Marilyn Meek, John Lineberger, Greg Niblett, and others. This group has taken steps to improve the way in which our church communicates with the Capitol Hill neighborhood and the wider metro community. Activities have included producing an Easter welcome banner, printing up cards describing dimensions of life at St. Mark's (designed gratis by John), using the cards for two door-to-door "literature drops" in the neighborhood, and paying for three ads in the Hill Rag based upon them. The stock of cards has dwindled due to budget cuts, but parishioners can still pick them up at the Welcome Table on Sundays. The committee also has explored the costs of doing a mailing to all new members of Congress and all new homebuyers on the Hill.

More recently, Keith has arranged with the St. Mark's Players and the Capitol Hill Restoration Society for a special visitor event on Mother's Day, May 11, when the Society will hold its annual tour of homes on the Hill. This year CHRS will include St. Mark's Nave as a stop on its tour and use the Parish Hall to provide refreshments to 1,000 - 2,000 people. Rosemary Harold has agreed to co-chair this event, which will need volunteers from the parish to serve as guides and ladle punch. Watch for future announcements.

Having served both long and well, Keith and his team are rotating off the committee in June. A new chair is needed to continue working on community relations, with special emphasis on the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Media Relations

In addition to getting ads in the Hill Rag, Keith and his team also looked for ways to get stories and free listings about St. Mark's worship services and events into area papers and web sites. I am proposing that this function be separated out and made the responsibility of one or two parishioners who will focus just on this important aspect of "external relations." Ideally one person could manage and update our media list, assist parish managers seeking to post information about specific events, and handle other generic notices and ads directly (budget permitting). The other person (preferably someone with journalistic skills) could identify and pursue media coverage for a limited number of stories emanating from St. Mark's each year, such as the current Lenten lecture series.

Last fall, when I was asked to handle media promotion for Peter Krummeck's theatrical workshops, I got help from the Players, Jan Genevro, Jennifer Dalzell, and others in assembling a fairly comprehensive media list. It includes names, addresses, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses for a wide variety of reporters and editors, event calendars, and web sites, including those at all the major universities in the area. More recently Raiford Gaffney and Rosemary Harold have assembled cost information on placing ads in Hill newspapers and directories.

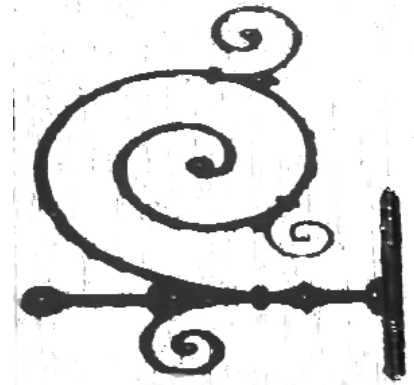
Current budget constraints limit what we can do on the fee-based front. For example, a single, small ad in either the Hill Rag or Voice of the Hill can cost between \$180-200. Our entire budget for "external relations" in 2003 is \$400. On the other hand, with some focused ingenuity and energy, we can certainly spread the word about St. Mark's with a more systematic approach to free listings and the cultivation of targeted media stories.

Communications Coordinator

If well used, the tools and techniques described above can help us attract newcomers and keep our parish community well knit together. With those twin goals in mind, I recommend that the Gospel and web editors and the chairs of community and media relations form a team headed up by a Communications Coordinator to serve for at least a one-year term. That individual could work with the Rector, Senior Warden, Pillar co-chairs, and the Vestry liaison for communications to identify important topics that might need to be addressed through multiple media or on a recurring basis during a given year. He or she could then work with the parishioners managing the specific communications vehicles to implement that game plan.

Ultimately, healthy communication at St. Mark's is everybody's business. But the systems we create can either support or hinder that individual work. I believe that the team approach described in this article -- with more tightly defined responsibilities for specific tasks -- can help us move into the future with greater clarity and confidence.

If you find this prospect invigorating and know you could do the job of Gospel editor, web editor, community relations chair, media relations chair, or Communications Coordinator, please contact me at 202-526-4799 or phawley@planning.org. †



AN INVITATION TO BISHOP CHANE

A HOPE, A DREAM AND A PLAN FOR ACTION:

"THE COLOR OF FEAR" AT THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

February 2003

Dear Bishop Chane,

We, as members of the St. Mark's Racial Reconciliation Committee (RRC), write to respond to your wonderful speech at the Diocesan Convention. We also wish to briefly share both what our RRC has been up to over the past year, as well as to share a hope, a dream, and a plan for action to begin racial healing in our country. We are moved to write this letter now due to a confluence of events.

Over the past 18 months, about 15 members of the RRC have been actively engaged in confronting our own painful wounds around racism. There have been many opportunities for individual committee members to experience the accompanying discoveries of forgiveness and compassionate healing. Many of us feel very grateful to have been blessed with this unique opportunity of committee meetings and training to become discussion group facilitators.

One of the most valuable tools that guided us along our journey has been a film entitled, "The Color of Fear" (CoF). This brilliant documentary authentically delves into the anguish that racism has inflicted upon the lives of eight men of diverse ethnicity. Many of us cry each time we watch it. We cry, not just for the pain that these men have all shared, but even more for their magnificent and beautiful courage to break through their inner barriers and demons to find love and compassion awaiting them with open, loving arms.

This film has been an inspiration for many throughout our community to garner the courage to face and open the doors of our own fears and anger -- and then, to dare to begin walking toward the light and freedom to be found on the other side. St. Marks began with a successful, parish-wide showing and discussion of the film (in the summer of 2001). We found it to be so moving that we then began hosting Dinner-Discussions to share CoF more broadly throughout the entire Washington, DC community. Now, in light of the recent political events (i.e. the resignation of Trent Lott as Senate majority leader and the debates around affirmative action), the RRC has pondered a vision of sharing this gift of the CoF, within our diocese and the larger community, during this historical window of opportunity for racial healing.

Indeed, we ask, is this perhaps the perfect time to launch a national awareness event? Rather than a time to blame any one person, party, or ideology, could we gather together and create the possibility of a time of racial healing? Many of our hearts have been wounded by racism, as have the lives of so many. Can we, as caring, committed Christians, conceive of making a difference in a spiritual realm?

Given these questions, our humble request is that you might consider lending your voice to invite members of Congress, the media, and religious leaders to join us at the National Cathedral for a showing of "The Color of Fear" and for the small group discussions that follow (i.e. similar to those at the Convention). The Producer of the CoF film, Lee Mun Wah, would honor an invitation to be present at a national viewing and to moderate a panel discussion. Much research has already been done, and there is also a cadre of committed workers who would join with your staff to help arrange the logistics and promotion of such an event.

Hopefully, our work would not just draw attention to the CoF film, but also would more broadly heighten public awareness of existing opportunities for racial reconciliation in our society. There are numerous groups of not-so-silent, good people who are engaged in healing this disease in our daily midst. This event may hopefully inspire other grass-roots spin-off initiatives across the country.

We truly feel that "The Color of Fear" film is so powerful and our nation's need for racial healing so great that the spirit is calling us to share this gift with others.

Bishop Chane, we all deeply appreciate your commitment to racial reconciliation. Thank you for taking the time to consider this possibility and we look forward to talking with you more in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jan Canterbury, Bill Jordan, Don Lipscomb, Peter Eveleth, and
Other supporting members of the St. Mark's Racial Reconciliation Committee
Robert Graham, Co-chair, Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee
Paul Abernathy, Rector, St. Mark's Episcopal Church

St. Mark's Race & Reconciliation Committee:

Where are We Now, Where are We Going

By LINDA STAHELI & JOHANA MCCARTHY

Have you ever been a minority, where you were the only one of your race or ethnicity in a large gathering? How did you feel? Did you know that some people of color wake up every morning reminding themselves that they are people of color in a light-skinned America? And many remind themselves that people of color are the majority in the world. Does this make you uncomfortable? Do you ever wonder where those feelings and thoughts you have about race come from? What is our role in building bridges of understanding between people of different skin colors?

A small group of St. Mark's parishioners, as well as our clergy, have been meeting for over eighteen months to talk about these questions, and many more. The St. Mark's Race and Reconciliation Committee (RRC), initiated by the Outreach Board, has evolved into a very committed group of folks that is interested in highlighting issues of race and reconciliation at St. Mark's, and ultimately in the larger Washington, D.C. community (See the following invitation from the RRC to the Bishop).

"Tri-chaired" by Bill Jordan, Don Lipscomb, and Peter Eveleth (prior to this existing triumvirate Peter Sherer was one of the three), the R&R Committee has focused its energy on the showing of a powerful documentary, *The Color of Fear*. The 1994 documentary highlights in 90 minutes a weekend discussion among eight men in California, two from each racial background: African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian. The conversations that follow in the film are at once provocative, painful, and enlightening.

Initially, St. Mark's invited a small group of parishioners from St. Mark's and other Hill Episcopal churches to view the film and take part in a facilitated discussion led by Robert Graham, Co-Chair of the Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee. Then, there was a decision to focus more intentionally and internally on St. Mark's. What followed was a showing to the entire congregation present during one Sunday afternoon in the summer of 2002. This experience prompted us to determine that small, living room showings and discussions would also be conducive to our goal. We are now launching our second in a series of evening showings and facilitated discussions of the video. Please see the bulletin for more details, as the next round of these showings will be taking place in March.

Throughout our time together, the R&R Committee has focused on both carrying out the business before us -- holding video showings, getting facilitator-training by Robert Graham, and thinking about how we can expand the dialogue -- and also deepening our own understanding of the issues with each other. This has been a very enriching experience, and one that we hope will impact more of the St. Mark's community.

We invite you to join us! Come see the video, join our committee, host a showing of the film, or just give us your thoughts.

For further information, please see the *Bulletin* for showings of the film in March or contact Linda Staheli (lindastaheli@mindspring.com), Johana McCarthy (twave79@hotmail.com), or others on St. Mark's RRC. ✚

The Gospel According to St. Mark's!



WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS ON ANY ASPECT OF PARISH LIFE BY MEMBERS OF THE ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY.

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

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

ACT Continues Our Work

BY EILEEN BLUMENTHAL

St Mark's and Honduras: our history St. Mark's parishioners of all ages have a great track record in assisting Honduras. St Mark's annual work trips to Honduras during the years 1989 through 2000 played an important part in the Washington Diocesan effort to better the lives of poorer Hondurans. On these trips, we got to know Honduran families and to spend time with members of the local St. Mark's community. We worked hard, learned a lot, and had fun, too. St. Mark's has continued work in Central American with a youth trip to Panama, and is now researching future trips to Honduras. Meanwhile, the work in Honduras generated Action for Community Transformation (ACT), a new non-profit founded to help needy Honduran children receive formal and informal education that would otherwise be beyond their reach.

MY STORY

The Honduras trip in 1998 was a big adventure for me, and the adventure didn't end when the trip was over. The trip was a stone thrown into the river, and the ripple effects are with me still. After the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1999, the St Mark's team that year focused on building houses for hurricane victims in the new village of Colonia Episcopal. The families were living in makeshift shelters and the children had no school while their new houses and new school were being built. As a former teacher, I decided to see how I could help by offering some reading groups and starting arts activities. I formed a team

with two Spanish-speaking former Peace Corps volunteers. Though not our intention at the outset, we ended up spending an entire year working in Colonia Episcopal.

After we completed our work, I had no plans for continuing my connection with Honduras. But, after awhile back in Washington, I sensed that ripple effect of my Honduras experience working in me. I wanted to stay involved with families I knew in Colonia Episcopal.

BUT HOW TO HELP?

To answer this question, I consulted villagers and the local teacher. We saw a challenge in working with the villagers to develop the life of the community beyond bricks and mortar. The families relocated in Colonia Episcopal, a city suburb, came from a farming community where people expected their kids to learn how to raise crops and animals. Many adults were illiterate. The challenge was to help equip teens for earning a living in an urban environment. In Honduras, education through grade six is free, but junior high or vocational school costs money, and the poor families of Colonia Episcopal could not afford the fees.

ACTION FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION IS BORN

With former volunteers, I established Action for Community Transformation (ACT) to invest in education for Honduran youth. Initially, we focused on kids we knew in the families of

Colonia Episcopal who would not be able to cover the costs on their own. ACT awards scholarships to every student who completes grade six. Students may choose to attend a vocational school or junior high in the nearby town. At present, we have nine scholarship holders; they range from the six young people attending the Catholic high school in Puerto Cortes to students of auto mechanics and dressmaking. Each time I visit Colonia Episcopal, these kids are eager to tell me about the new knowledge and skills they are gaining, and I see them full of a sense of life's possibilities.

ACT is now two years old. We have expanded to new areas beyond our core scholarship program in Colonia Episcopal. An arts program in Copan Ruinas helps street kids paint, read and write stories, and explore their Mayan heritage. The Paramedics for Children Program helps deliver notebooks and school supplies to children in remote areas. We funded 70 scholarships to the Environmental Leadership Project, in which Honduran kids learn about the environment and develop skills in building community involvement.

As ACT moves ahead, I look forward to seeing the ripple effect that our educational aid to these young Hondurans has on their lives and on their contribution to their communities.

ACT is supported by donations from individuals, foundations, and St. Mark's Honduras Committee. For more information, please contact Eileen Blumenthal at blumenthal@juno.com ☩

The Vestry Mouse Report

By RAIFORD GAFFNEY

This report is a compilation of the January 19 and February 23, 2003 Vestry Meetings.

From the January and February Meetings:

Annual Meeting and Election:

The 2003 Nominating Committee is comprised of retiring Vestry members David Deutsch, David Evelyn, and Monica Mills; retiring Wardens George Meng and Jane Rutherford, and Greg Niblett. Nominations close on March 23rd. The Annual Meeting is on Sunday, April 27th following one service at 10 a.m. and pub lunch. If you are interested in running or in nominating someone, please complete a nomination form -- which is available from the Nominating Committee or in the Nave.

Treasurer's Report:

In January, Treasurer David Willson reported that we ended the year 2002 with a cash surplus of \$87,560 due to a large flow of \$180,498 in December and spending below budget amounts in some categories. In February, David reported that \$12,642 in 2002 pledges was received in January, for a total of \$592,397 -- which means that 95% of all 2002 pledges have been paid. Traditionally, only 93% of pledges are paid. David also reported in February that we had total income of \$73,253 and total expenses of \$71,336 in January, for a positive cash flow of \$1,907.

2003 Budget:

At the January meeting, David Willson reported that pledges increased \$9,000 (now \$765,000) since the December 15th Vestry meeting. The Finance Committee recommended changes to the 2003 budget approved at that meeting. Most of these were "conforming, correcting, and other changes to expenses to restore balance to the budget..." - items for which apparently there were not sufficient funding at the December meeting. Significant budget changes which the Vestry approved were the establishment of a 2003 cash flow reserve of \$130,300 from 2003 pledges paid in 2002, and the transfer of \$21,500 from the General Fund balance to the Designated Fund for Building Replacement Reserve. There was a lengthy discussion concerning a motion to transfer \$4,000 in funds designated for the Diocesan pledge to restore the Children's Music Director's position for the un-funded (second) six months of 2003. This motion was defeated by a vote of 6 nays to 4 ayes. The Vestry approved a transfer of \$2,000 from the Diocesan pledge to the Planned Giving Committee. FYI, Rector Paul Abernathy reported that St. Mark's is the 7th wealthiest of 94 parishes in the Washington Diocese, but is 82nd in pledges to the Diocese. The 2003 budget was approved by the Vestry by a 9/1 vote.

At the February meeting, a draft narrative description of the 2003 budget, which was prepared by Christi Hawley Sadoti, was discussed. By the end of February, the Treasurer hopes to have mailed statements to Parish Managers and Treasurers explaining the budget allocations for activities and accounts under their jurisdiction and by the end of March, he hopes to have a Parish Financial Manager's Manual completed and distributed

Feedback on Budget Impact:

The Vestry voted to add this topic to the agenda at the February meeting. Attendees shared their feelings and thoughts about the recent budget process, including the recent discussion and meeting by the parents of members of the children's choirs. Apparently,

there was nothing brought up by the parents that the Vestry did not consider and discuss at the December 15th budget meeting. Some specific comments were: that we are experiencing the loss of the specific individuals whose positions have been reduced or eliminated, not the duties and qualifications of those individuals; that it is very difficult to hold the tension between the current circumstances and the duty to shape the future; that we have to give up on the present in order to have hope for the future; that we do know and hear what parishioners are saying, but that we cannot do what some of these parishioners want; and, that although we may be losing a professional youth director, this does not mean that we don't love and care deeply about the youth of the parish. Finally, the Vestry decided to hold a Parish Managers meeting to discuss this budget aftermath and how to focus on and implement youth activities in the general parish activities. Associate Rector Stephanie Nagley and Vestry members Nancy Van Scoyoc and Tracy Council will head up this activity.

St. Mark's Signage:

At the January meeting, Rob Hall, member of the Ad Hoc Sign Committee, stated that the D.C. Fine Arts Commission had approved the proposed wooden signs and that the Committee currently is waiting for approval from the D.C. traffic office. The Committee estimates that the two signs will cost a maximum of \$8,300. Necessary funds will be in hand before each sign is made. Rob said that the Committee anticipates that the project will be partially funded by monetary gifts -- in fact, over \$2,000 has already been pledged by interested parishioners. He made the proposal that this Committee use approximately \$600 in a Vestry fund from the bookstall fund, to do "quiet" fundraising to those interested in contributing to these signs, and also hold a Book and Bake Sale on February 15th. The Vestry approved the proposal.

At the February meeting, Vestry member Peter Hawley reported that approximately \$1,800 was raised at the book and bake sale towards the two wooden signs. At least one of these signs is expected to be erected by the end of June. The Vestry also decided to make a temporary sign concerning Easter Day services.

From the February Meeting:

Endowment Committee Proposal on Policy for Disposition of Bequests:

Vestry member Katharine Redmond presented a proposed policy for disposition of undesignated bequests. The Committee proposed that such bequests be transferred to the General Fund of the Endowment. Treasurer David Willson presented an alternative that 50% of any undesignated bequests, up to a ceiling of \$30,000, be deposited in the Designated Fund for Building Replacement Reserve, with the remainder going to the General Fund of the Endowment. Katharine had no opposition to David's proposal and it was passed by the Vestry.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raiford Gaffney, Vestry Mouse

Vestry meetings are held generally on the 3rd Sunday of each month and are open to members of the St. Mark's community. ☩

My eMail Imbroglia

BY DON THIBEAU

I cringed when I heard Communications was the theme of this Gospel. I am still recovering from my near "virtual death" experience with feedback at St. Mark's. I was horrified when Linda Barnes "leaked" my email some weeks ago. I'm sure it was unintentional. The power of including any "e-group" in the cc line of an email is not to be underestimated. Email creates its own communications dynamic.

Email creates its own reality, too. I didn't intend to raise a public "e-group" issue, but I did. I was working out my feelings by privately asking Linda, as I have other elders, for feedback about issues at St. Mark's that I care about. But the law of unintended consequences put into motion what was read as a criticism of the Vestry and the Senior Warden. That's not the way I feel. My email imbroglia flew in the face of what I think and how I feel about my St. Mark's community.

So it was a painful irony for me that I was skewered by my own sword. Who was I to be commenting publicly on feedback at St. Mark's? The tempest in a teapot I created was corrected and critiqued by our leadership. The Senior Warden rightfully reminded me about his Advisory Committee experience and the budget process just completed. There is no basis to criticize the process the Vestry used to make its tough calls. George Meng made articulate, lawyerly, and persuasive cases. I was brought up believing the more penance one paid on earth, the less time in purgatory. If that's true, I imagine St. Mark's vestry members earn EZ passes to go through the pearly gates. I understand, respect, and support the Vestry's decisions. I just don't happen to agree with them.

As Paul might have sermonized, what we say in email and e-group communications, even when well-made and craftily gained, often is only momentary contact, falling short of real long-term importance and easily fading from corporate

memory. Constructive dialog and feedback goes beyond our hungering for acceptance and the demands of the occasion. It does not change countenance and color to match the moment. A problem with feedback in e-groups, talk radio, and occasionally in sermon seminar is that one's perceptions of what is communicated in the moment can be very wrong. I can testify with single marks of my own.

As Paul also has pointed out, because of our overwhelming need of acceptance, it sometimes seems to work. It's why I feel so strongly and have written about the importance of the kind of feedback found in St. Mark's Advisory Committees and evaluations. In the budget discussions and the Vestry's difficult financial decisions, I saw St. Mark's at our best and at our bravest. The Vestry defined our community in terms we all deal with: by what we spend our money on. And in part, what it is we seek to practice in this place -- living in the tension of what it is we want and what it is we do as individuals and in community. When I am not sure what people think, I look at what they do...like how they spend money. When the Vestry and Rector choose to reduce spending on the people and programs I care about, I sought the private council of elders. No surprise when I was "outed" as a skeptic, the tension rose.

This is the word of an individual who loves and longs for community. These are questions we answer in the everyday choices we make; the check written, the meeting attended, the feedback shared and withheld. As it turned out the time is ripe and right, for me as a member and for us to gain a renewed sense of who we, as a community, are now and are to become.

Context: For what initiated this discourse, you may read "Talk Radio" and related comments on the St. Mark's E Group (November 2002). †

2003 BUDGET NARRATIVE AVAILABLE

Treasurer David Willson and Christi Hawley Sadoti have prepared a narrative of St. Mark's 2003 budget. This 3-page document, describing the year's balanced budget, including a general breakdown of expenditures, is available now. Pick up a copy at the Welcome Table in church, see the Vestry bulletin board in the foyer by the Parish Hall, or, for further information, go directly to web page at

http://www.stmarks.net/about/financial/2003_budget_narrative.html

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

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CAPITOL HILL

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