

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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Notice of Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, February 3, 2008, following a combined service at 9:00 a.m.

- The meeting begins with a pitch-in brunch (please use the sign-up sheet to ensure we have sufficient quantities of the necessary brunch items).
- There will be nursery care for the entire morning, and a planned activity for Church School children following the brunch.

Report Booklets containing all programmatic and financial reports will be available for study and review on Sunday, January 27th

(plan to bring this booklet to the meeting with you).

- January 18th is the deadline for reports to ensure their inclusion in the Report Booklet.

In addition to eating together, we must

- Receive the reports of the Finance Committee and the 2008 budget.
- Ratify the nomination of new members to the Trustees of the Endowment Fund.
- Consider other matters of general joy or concern about the mission and ministry and common life of St. John's as they may be brought before us, and identify new congregational initiatives for the coming year.
- Give and receive thanks all around.

Our intent is to adjourn no later than noon so that all can help clean up!

A View From the Big Pew

Dear Friends,

At a recent meeting of the Worship Committee, I picked up another weekly responsibility. It's not tedious, but it got me to thinking...

As some of you know (and now all of you do), I am the person who creates the final text of our weekly Sunday Intercessions. If you don't care for them you have me to blame. If you find them helpful in your corporate prayer and/or in helping to form your personal prayer, my purpose is achieved and I am pleased. One element of those intercessions is the daily praying of the parish directory with the goal of praying for every member of the parish by name once every month. Perhaps you share in this by praying the directory at home. It is this element of the Sunday intercessions that gives rise to my new responsibility.

The Worship Committee was discussing how Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs) would on occasion mispronounce a name as they lead the prayers. In the good old days when all Episcopalians could be assumed to be of English extraction and so had surnames like Stafford or Rochester or Smith or Baker, good pronunciation was a piece of cake. But as our Anglican way of practicing the Christian life has become attractive and has drawn others to us and we have received these folk into our midst we find surnames that are not of English derivation. Like, for example, *Tourangeau*. So the honest concern was, "How to avoid mispronunciation of a less than common name?" The underlying concern or fear is that a person might hear their name mispronounced and take offense or feel insulted.

As our discussion evolved we began to move from mispronunciation to the qualifications of mispronouncers. So I suggested that since I prepare those intercessions on a Wednesday anyway, I would email the text to each of the LEMs for their review in advance of the Sunday service.

The email I send contains instruction to go over the names and be confident of their pronunciation. Of course we immediately encounter the problem of "How can I know what I don't know?" which being translated means, "If I think I'm pronouncing a name properly, how do I know that I'm not?" So I encourage each of the LEMs to speak with one of the clergy before the Sunday service if they have any doubt or question about the proper pronunciation of a name they will pray.

It's not a perfect solution. We've been doing this for about a month now, and I hope all of us will give thanks for our LEMs' willingness to prepare conscientiously for their role in our liturgies. And for those who are tempted to take offense if your name is mispronounced? Perhaps you could join me (whose name is normally mispronounced), and stay cool. As my daughter has said to me many times, "Chill, dad ..."

And for those more concerned about another person's mispronunciation than is the person whose name is actually mispronounced, I recommend St. Matthew 7:4.

While we're on the subject of taking or fearing to give offense, here's another conversation that repeats from time to time. In discussions about how to welcome and greet visitors and newcomers to Sunday services or other events, sooner or later the story gets told of the new usher or greeter who enthusiastically welcomes an individual by saying "Welcome to St. John's. Are you visiting today?" And the person being greeted replies in these or similar words, "Harumpf. NO, I'm not VISITING! I've been a member of this parish for 40 YEARS, and I'll thank YOU to remember that!" The new usher, reeling from the shock wave of that response and feeling that they have just committed the cardinal sin of parish life, quits ushering altogether and it's five years or more before s/he can be encouraged to undertake any public ministry in the parish again. (I'm tempted to add: *And the Harumpf!-ing member continues in their pattern of attending worship every year, on the same Sunday, if it's not too crowded.*)

Unlike the all-too familiar experience of having my name mispronounced, I have never been mistaken as a newcomer. Oh, there was that time at St. Mark's in Milwaukee when I had been on the job as a clean-shaven just-graduated-from-seminary curate in my first parish for about two months, the summer was ending and people were getting back into more regular attendance patterns, and I greeted a man I knew to be Frank Holt, the Jr. Warden of the parish, after the early service one day. Mr. Holt looked at me and said "Oh. I thought we hired the one with the beard."

The reality is that in a congregation the size of ours it is impossible for everyone to "know" everyone else. This is true even for those in leadership roles, let alone for the average parishioner trying to help in a ministry of welcome and greeting, or for the conscientious LEM who might mispronounce a name they don't know. This "too big to know everyone" reality is why larger churches do better with multiple clergy and program staff so that the various constituencies within the congregation can have some sense of connection with the leadership, and why churches develop multiple small group ministries so that people can have a sense of belonging and being known and having a more intimate support community.

Learning to live with such strategies in that larger social reality, when because of a spiritual longing of some sort or because of our childhood memories we have an image of the church as a small, intimate place where everyone knows everyone else, demands from each of us the ability to "Chill, dad." We never know when we will not recognize someone, or when we might mispronounce someone's name. Nor can we predict when it will be we who are not recognized or whose name causes another to stumble. Those of us who attend frequently but are not known by all are called to chill, and those who attend only on occasion are likewise called to chill. And those of us who fear or flinch at the imperfection of the ministry of others are called to chill, as those of us who fear taking on new ministries (with their risks) are also called to chill.

(continued on page 5)

St. John's Book Club – 2008 Season

The book club meets on the third Wednesday of selected months at 7pm in the Commons. Questions? Contact Amy Paget, pagets@gmail.com.

January 16, 2008 -**Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty** by Muhammad Yunus, Alan Jolis. Autobiographical account of the founder of the Grameen Bank and Nobel prize winner, Muhammad Yunus. This work is a fundamental rethinking of the economic relationship between the rich and the poor, as well as their rights and obligations. **[Leader: Dorothy Jones]**

February 20 -**Quiet Strength: the Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life** by Tony Dungy. Dungy's words and example have intrigued millions of people, particularly following his victory in Super Bowl XLI, the first for an African American coach. How is it possible for a coach—especially a football coach—to win the respect of his players and lead them to the Super Bowl without the screaming histrionics, the profanities, the demand that the sport come before anything else? **[Leaders: Albrights]**

March 19 -Any Alexander McCall Smith title from the following:
#1 Ladies Detective Agency Series
The 44 Scotland Street Series
The Sunday Philosophy Club Series
The Professor Dr. Von Igelfeld Series **[Leader:**

April 16th - Inspirational Poetry to Celebrate Poetry Month **[Leader: A.Paget]**

May 21 - **Mountains beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World** by Tracy Kidder. **[Leader: Karl Brandt]**

June 18th - ??????????????????????

Under Consideration

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson
A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini
Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

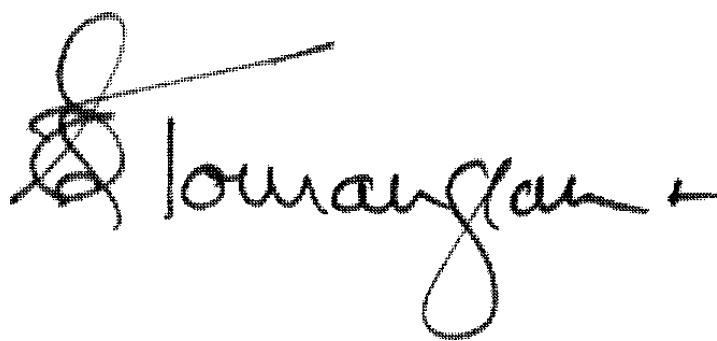
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(A View from the Big Pew, continued from page 3)

I believe the paradox of grace is that with all this chilling St. John's will become a warmer place! Good humor instead of crankiness, the sharing of our own foibles instead of the criticism of others, the recognition that "I guess I really don't attend as frequently as I should," and the willingness to stretch and try something outside my comfort zone: of such is the Kingdom of God, I think.

What usually happens, though, is that out of fear of making a mistake or of giving offense we either never start or we quit. We quit welcoming or greeting, we quit praying through the parish cycle, we quit trying new ways to enrich our life or finding new ways of making real the welcome and compassion of Jesus for all. We quit trying far too often. All that because we don't want to offend or get our heads bitten off. The Good News is supposed to set us free, but too often we fail to hear that. We remain captive to our fears or our timidity. We need to move beyond that. We each need to do our part to make St. John's a safe place in which to take these social and congregational "risks" and we need to take some of them ourselves.

So for the new calendar year, this Year of Grace 2008, let's pledge to live more gracefully toward one another. After all, even though she is 'just' my kid, I think really it is God who speaks to me each time I hear Annie saying, "Chill, dad."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lou Angan" with a stylized flourish above the first letter and a small cross-like mark at the end.

**2nd Wednesday
Lunchtime
Concert**

12:10pm

January 9, 2008

***Allynn McInerney,
flute***

***Michael Bennett,
organ***

Artists at our monthly lunchtime concert in January will be residents Allynn McInerney and Michael Bennett. They will play some selections for Epiphany by Maurice Durufé and Charles Callahan as flute solo, organ solo, and duet. Enjoy a simple lunch following and catch up on each other's Christmas happenings!



A few thoughts on Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*

By Robert Kurtz

I recently received a forwarded email warning me not to take my children to see *The Golden Compass*, the soon to be released movie based on the first novel in the Philip Pullman trilogy known as *His Dark Materials*. According to the email Hollywood is conspiring with Pullman, an avowed atheist who hates C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, to "dumb down" the story so that parents will let down their guard and allow their children to read the anti-Christian trilogy, at the end of which "the children kill God and everyone is free to do as they please." Here's my response:

If Christians choose not to read books by atheists or watch movies based on those books, that's fine, but I don't think we should bear false witness. I've read Pullman's trilogy twice. Will and Lyra, the two young protagonists, do not "kill God". Actually, they attempt to release him from the crystal casket in which the church has imprisoned him while committing unspeakable atrocities and claiming to be acting under his authority. The rescue attempt fails, for God has become so debilitated by his imprisonment that he is unable to survive outside the casket (*The Amber Spyglass* p. 410-411, Alfred Knopf paperback edition). This may not be an image of God we Christians are thrilled with, but it's a far cry from "the children [killing] God". As for being "free to do as they please", Will and Lyra are faced with an excruciating moral dilemma at the end of the trilogy (after not killing God). There is something they want more than anything else. They have it within their power to acquire it; however, doing so will unleash forces that will subject humanity to further suffering and, eventually, possible annihilation.

I won't go into more detail than that or tell you what they decide. (You'll just have to read the books if you want to find out!). The series does raise a number of questions that Christians should not avoid pondering just because they are asked by an atheist. A big one for me is the nature of salvation. I find myself uneasy with the implication in the email warning that fear of divine retribution is the only thing preventing us all from "doing as we please." I prefer to believe that loving God with all my heart, soul, and might, and loving my neighbor as myself, is what I really want to do anyway. Salvation in Christ sets me free to do as I please. How sad that religion is so often portrayed by Christians and atheists alike as confining one in a prison of "thou-shalt-nots".

Another is what to do with those parts of the church's history (and present) that we as Christians would rather forget or ignore. Pullman, to his credit, does not blame God for the sins of the church, although some of his characters on the side of the rebellion do. Rather, the church's leaders in the

story have confined God, usurped his power and authority, abused and neglected him, and, when he no longer served their purpose, abandoned him and left him for dead. The children's response when they find God is compassion for the victim and horror at the cruelty of those who have inflicted this suffering upon him. My only real disagreement with Pullman here is that I consider God more resilient than Pullman's portrayal of him. I believe God will survive our abuse and neglect.

Actually, I have been pondering these questions since long before I read the Pullman trilogy. He can't really claim credit for changing how I think. Still, I believe that interacting with individuals that do not share my beliefs (and that includes a lot of Christians!) has, over time, strengthened and deepened my faith and allowed it to mature further than if I had refused to leave my comfort zone.

I don't recommend the Pullman books for young children. I've heard comparisons to J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. But it would be a mistake to suggest that *His Dark Materials* is simply *Narnia* for atheists. Rowling peppers even the dark parts of her narrative with hiccupping toasters and sarcastic gargoyles; reading *Narnia* feels as if we are sitting on Lewis's lap while he tells us a cozy bedtime story. Pullman's writing is neither playful nor intimate. Don't look for comic relief because there is none. The story line itself makes laughter almost impossible: in a universe parallel to our own, the church is abducting children off the streets of London and other English cities, taking them to a research station in the far north and surgically separating them from their souls in an attempt to abolish Original Sin. The killing, torture, abuse, suffering and betrayal begin early and continue unrelentingly. On the other hand, so do the bonds of courage, loyalty and love between Lyra and her allies. While I did not laugh, I did develop a deep affection for Will and Lyra, almost as if they were real people. I felt profound regret every time I had to put the books down and face the reality that they were, in fact, fictional. I don't know if Pullman really hates *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but I am almost certain that C.S. Lewis would have enjoyed *His Dark Materials*, though I'm sure he would have disagreed with Pullman on a number of points, both religious and stylistic, just as I did. If Lewis were to prod Pullman with some good-natured ribbing about how much Will resembles Digory Kirke, I would have to say that he would be more than entitled.

As of this writing, the movie has not been released, so all I've seen are posters and trailers. I assume that the story will indeed be "dumbed down" as compared with the books. I don't put much stock in claims of a conspiracy to lull Christian parents into complacency while the sneaky atheists slip into their children's heads and destroy their faith. Dumbing down books is simply business as usual for Hollywood.

My initial impression is that the movie version of Lyra is much too pretty. In the book, she hangs out with street urchins. While not one herself, she identifies strongly with them. She's smart and scrappy. She ought to have a grimy face, unkempt hair and a lot of hangnails. Will doesn't enter until *The Subtle Knife*, book two of the series, so we'll have to wait and see what they do with him.

Now, in the spirit of full disclosure, lest I come off sounding too self-righteous, I confess that my life abounds with missed opportunities to deepen my faith by interacting with people whose views I do not share. For example, I have never read anything by Tim LaHaye. Nor do I make a practice of listening to Rush Limbaugh or watching the 700 Club. I don't think that doing so would make me a bad person, but I'm kind of busy, and for now I have chosen not to make time to interact with these individuals. So, if you decide not to read or watch *The Golden Compass*, I'll understand. Just know that you're missing a good read, and an opportunity to wrap your mind around some really provocative ideas.

Province V Convention and Annual Meeting of Episcopal Church Women 2008

Episcopal Church Women (ECW) will hold its next Province V Convention and Annual Meeting in Appleton, Wisconsin, on April 4-6, 2008, hosted by the ECW of the Diocese of Fond du Lac. All women in the Episcopal Church are considered members of ECW and are encouraged to attend this meeting. However, membership in ECW is not a requirement for coming to the meeting; any woman is welcome to attend. The theme for the meeting is "The Heart of a Woman." The Biblical verse that inspires us to give our hearts to God is taken from Proverbs 14:30: "A heart at peace gives life to the body."

The keynote speaker is the Rev. Bindy Snyder who has chosen to speak on the topic "With Love from Mother." She will use some of her experiences with women's history, how they have had an impact on what women's roles are today in the Episcopal Church and how they are constantly changing. She will also share ways to communicate and record our mothers' and grandmothers' experiences as well as helping us to write our own life stories. The Rev. Snyder lives in Memphis, Tennessee, where she is Chaplain and Dean of the Chapel at Memphis Theological Seminary as well as being priest-in-charge Calvary Episcopal Church, Osceola, Arkansas. Among her many accomplishments she is past National President of the Episcopal Women's History Project and is also a board member to the National Episcopal Historians and Archivists.

In addition to the Province V annual meeting several activities and workshops have been planned. On Friday attendees will have an opportunity to choose to tour St. Paul's Cathedral in Fond du Lac or to tour a variety of sites in Appleton, or to attend one of several craft demonstrations and workshops. On Friday night a performance by several African musicians, organized by the Rev. Samuel Nsengiyumva of St. Paul's in Sheboygan Falls, will be the highlight of the evening activities.

On Saturday there will be a wide variety of seminars as well as the Province V annual meeting. At midday the Eucharist will be celebrated by the Rt. Rev. Russell Jacobus, Bishop of the Diocese of Fond du Lac at All Saints Episcopal Church in Appleton. In the evening the Oneida Singers will perform hymns and other songs in the Oneida language.

The two and a half day event will be held at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. All women in the Province V Dioceses are urged to attend. Province V includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and part of Missouri. There is no "membership" fee or requirement for ECW membership. There is, however, a registration fee for the meeting. The fee for the meeting \$250.00 for double occupancy, \$350.00 for single. A deposit of \$100.00 (\$150.00 single) is needed with the registration form. Registration will be accepted until the event is sold out. The registration form and more detailed information about activities are available in the website www.fdlecw.org. The fee includes lodging for two nights, meals on Friday night, all day Saturday, Sunday breakfast and convention materials.

This meeting will be a great place to see old friends and make new ones and to learn about what Episcopal women are doing all over Province V. A great time is waiting for all.

Hope to see you in Appleton next April!
Carol Feller Gottard, Province V Convention Planning Committee

Notes from the Property Committee

The St. John's Property Committee, made of a merry band of elves, kicked out of Santa's workshop, is busily working on projects for 2008. We completed many different projects in 2007. Among them were the Spring and Fall Project's Days. We had help from many different people in the congregation with these projects – their assistance was greatly appreciated.

Property Committee Meeting and Work Projects Needs

The Property Committee of St. John's meets the first Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m. in the Commons. Following the update meeting, we work on necessary projects for that month. The next meeting is scheduled for January 5, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.

Top 5 Work Projects List

- #5 Repair upstairs hallway ceiling near west stairway
- #4 Caulk and paint around new upstairs windows
- #3 Scratch and dent removal on pews
- #2 Hang nursery bulletin board
- #1 New Property Committee Members (we like the ones we have but we want more!)

If you're interested in assisting with one of these projects please contact Tony Bailey at: tkbailey@earthlink.net or 463-7263 for information and supplies.

So, you think you know St. John's ? How many furnaces does St. John's have?

- A. 1
- B. 3 (Nave, Commons, Offices)
- C. 5 (Nave, Commons, Offices, upstairs classrooms, Food Pantry)
- D. 14

Watch this space next month for the answer. (You can work with others)



Praise God from whom ALL Blessings flow –

Praise God with prayers of thanksgiving and offerings of coins or bills in your Blue Box for UTO. These gifts of thanksgiving to help others reach their needs and dreams world wide. These needs include housing, education, health care, worship materials, needed physical space, food, transportation, leadership training, etc. Check out the UTO grant booklet for more information.

St. John's has two UTO gatherings a year – Spring and Fall. Get yourself or family a UTO Blue Box of your own. They are found on the dresser outside the kitchen with other UTO information.

Wishing each of you a blessed New Year of courage, thankfulness, sharing and love.

Our final tally for money gifts in the Fall in gathering 2007 was: \$601.43. Every penny goes for grants!

Yours in Christ

Mary Louise Davis

Adult Inquirer's Seminar, 2008

The Adult Inquirer's Seminar will begin again on Tuesday, January 15th, at 7:00 p.m. This first session will meet in the library of the Rectory (the building housing the parish offices). Each session will last approximately 90 minutes, and the series will run for approximately 15 weeks.

The Seminar is designed for

- o Those wishing to learn more about the Episcopal Church and/or who wish to "join" the Episcopal Church.
- o Episcopalians who'd like to deepen their own spirituality and/or their understanding of our faith tradition.
- o Those looking for a way to answer the Lenten call for study and reflection (February runs from February 6th to March 22nd this year).
- o Spouses/partners/significant others of anyone attending because they fit into one of the categories above.

The Seminar is a small group experience of journeying together into some aspects of Anglican/Episcopal faith and practice. It is facilitated by the rector; feel free to call him at 742-4079 or email at <et@stjohns-laf.org> for further information, or to reserve a spot.

Thanks

Dear Father Ed,

Thank you for coordinating the donation and preparation of eight turkeys for the Community Thanksgiving Celebration. St. John's generosity made it possible for us to continue this wonderful holiday tradition. It is uplifting to know that so many in your congregation are so generous to those less fortunate in the community.

Gratefully,
Joyce Boehm
Program Director