

JOURNAL

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

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FROM THE RECTOR



THE REV.
JOHN F.
DWYER
RECTOR

Welcome to St. Christopher's new *Traveler Journal*! Our first quarterly publication of what we hope will become a journal that informs, inspires, and spiritually nourishes our congregation in different ways, with each and every article, with each and every contributor. We hope, in the future, to have contributors from within the parish, and from without as well, to give voice to opinions and differing perspectives on various topics that can challenge and delight and educate all of us. We have high hopes that this quarterly journal will be able to offer theological, artistic, spiritual and emotional fodder to our lives as a community working on building the Kingdom Jesus opens for us by his life and ministry.

This Journal is being published in the manner of our prior "Traveler" monthly. It will be sent through the "snail" mail, continuing our long term contract with the vendor who creates this document. The *e-Traveler*, which "hit the wires" earlier this month, is a publication replacing the former "Traveler," to enable us to provide more current and up-to-date information to our parishioners. The deadline for the off-site publication (as this new Journal is produced) has a longer lead-time, making much of the content of a timely newsletter somewhat stale. The format of this Journal, being one of topical and educational content, will more readily fit the time frames of an off site publication, as the news within this Journal is unlikely to be as time sensitive as that which appears in our *e-Traveler*.

The staff, in discussing what and how to structure the content of the *Traveler Journal*, believes making a broad theme for each volume, a centerpiece from which to jump off creatively, an appropriate concept to follow. We have chosen, for this volume, the broad ideas of Liturgy and Sacraments, with each of the staff writing an article on a topic of their choosing within the broad framework of that theme. Our desire for future publications is to widen the scope of voices contributing to this Journal. If any individual has an interest in being a quarterly contributor (once or on a more regular basis) please contact either me, or our Parish Administrator. We would be delighted to hear from you and coordinate for which volume you might contribute.

As I wrote in the *e-Traveler*, we are making some shifts in our various liturgies. I stated that I would give further explanation in this Journal, so here goes...We will be offering a Sunday evening, alternative-style Eucharist beginning Sunday, February 12th at 5:30 pm. This will be a service in addition to, not supplanting, our two Sunday morning Eucharists. On Epiphany, we "test drove" some ideas we have been batting around: paperless music,



an altar on the floor of the nave, a casual ambience, a stream-lined service, voices from the pews not a lectern, an inter-active and conversational discussion responding to the Gospel, gathering around the table during the prayer of consecration, feeding each other Jesus' presence among us. We are evaluating, discussing and

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THE REV.
WANDA
COPELAND

ASSISTANT
PRIEST

Liturgy Saved My Life, and My Soul

Back in the 1980s when I began to explore ordination seriously, I wondered what it would be like to be a priest, and exactly what made a priest unique. Having grown up as a Southern Baptist, I knew a bit about the role of pastor, but the Episcopal model is very different in scope and intention. One of the first places I looked was in the Book of Common Prayer. The ‘role’ of the priest as found in the BCP service, The Ordination of a Priest, describes this about who a priest is to be:

Now you are called to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God’s blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.” (*BCP*, p. 530)

Another, shorter, way of saying this is:

“a priest is to proclaim the gospel by word and deed, fashioning his or her life by it. A priest is to love and serve the people given to his or her care, to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness, to speak God’s blessing, to share in the administration of baptism and eucharist, and other ministrations entrusted to the priest.” (*Associated Parishes, Holy Orders, 1991*, p.10)

As the discernment process continued, it was clear, however, this wasn’t the only story. Deacons, licensed lay readers, and bishops also preach; all God’s children are to love and serve the poor, etc;

and Baptism is not an exclusive rite for priests. So, what made priesthood the **exact** track I was discerning? The ‘inside’ church lingo is that the exclusive responsibilities of priests are about **A B C**—**Absolution, Blessing and Consecration** (not necessarily in that order, nor all together). These are the elements of the liturgy that are reserved for priests (and bishops). At its core, this is what makes priests’ call different from the call of anyone else. That is what has kept me in the Episcopal Church, has allowed me to most completely give of myself to God and to the church which Christ began. But that is not what brought me in.

In the Southern Baptist tradition, I remember church services had a smattering of music, some scripture, but were heavy on the sermon. Often twenty minutes or longer, the preacher would expound on Scripture, often only a verse or two snatched from a larger passage. As soon as I was old enough to read the Bible for myself, it became clear to me that what I was reading in the Bible did not seem congruent with what was preached from the pulpit. Thus began my search.

As long as I can remember, there was nothing I wanted more from life* than to live the way I thought God wanted me to. I wanted to be kind; welcome those like and unlike me; immerse myself in Bible study; and always be in the Temple, like Anna. I could not imagine anything more rich or enjoyable in life than being in church everyday, noodling around, helping others, praying, studying and sharing fellowship. In line with the Baptist emphasis on mission, I determined to be a missionary to Africa. I was going to re-invigorate Albert Schweitzer’s hospital at Lambaréné, Gabon [f/k/a French Equatorial Guinea].

* “**...nothing more from life...**”—that is after I figured out that a left-handed girl was never going to be a major league shortstop—or at least not in my lifetime.

By the time I got to college, my life-dream had morphed somewhat. I had toyed with missionary, journalist, doctor—all helping professions. But I had not found a church home. where I could express the fullness of my passion for God. In college, I explored most other mainline Christian denominations. Each had their own worship style. In my junior year of college, a roommate invited me to the Episcopal Church to hear her quartet sing. I walked in the door on Sunday morning and knew that my search for a church home was over.

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THE DEACON DISCUSSES



THE REV.
JANET
MACNALLY
DEACON

The place where Episcopalians meet their theology is found in the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Episcopalians are, according to Leonel Mitchell, “liturgical theologians” as they relate to the prayer book following the Latin maxim of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, or in other words the way we pray shapes the way we believe.¹ In a very real sense then, in order to examine the theology of the rite of baptism in the Episcopal Church (ECUSA), it is necessary to study the liturgy as found in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.

ECUSA through the revision of its liturgies sought to restore the rite of baptism to one that more closely resembled the early church not only in its liturgy, but its theology as well. This change became one of the most significant changes that occurred within the prayer book revision. Associated Parishes (AP) stated “the recovery of the centrality of baptism to the church’s life is *the most important event* in the process of church renewal.” Baptism, it argued then and continues to argue still, is the sole foundation for church membership, participation in sacraments, or subsequent ministry and is to be administered in a threefold rite of water, anointing and communion for children and infants as well as for adults.² Exemplifying this belief the rubrics for Holy Baptism state the following: “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.”³ Therefore, rite is complete in and of itself and its effect is permanent.

Through the revision of the liturgy the church also sought to re-establish the importance of the rite to the worshipping community at large.



Embodying this tenet the rubrics state that there are set times when it is most appropriate for baptism to occur. These are the following: the Great Vigil of Easter, Pentecost, All Saints Day or All Saints Sunday, the Baptism of Our Lord and the bishop’s visitation. Furthermore, the church has set the sacrament of Holy Baptism within the framework of public worship, with the rubrics including the directive that “Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service of a Sunday or other feast.”⁴ Only in the most unusual of circumstances is the rite to be private and set apart from the community. This underscores the centrality of the rite that AP first referred to and provides not only for the entire community to witness the initiation and welcome the newly baptized as well as renew their own baptismal covenant, but also sets the rite on occasions where the significance of baptism to our lives as Christians is reflected in the propers for day. Thus through her liturgy the church has established her belief that the rite of baptism is significant not only to those about to be initiated but to the community at large for they are also participants in the church’s growth and renewal.

The actual act of baptism follows the opening acclamation, the propers for the day and the sermon. After the candidates are presented and examined, the entire congregation is invited to join with those about to be baptized in reaffirming their own baptismal covenant. The prayer for Thanksgiving over the Water follows and reads in part, “In [the water of baptism] we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. “... we pray you by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here cleansed from sin and born again may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.”⁵ This prayer is central to the rite and provides perhaps its most complete theological statement with the chief effects of baptism clearly stated through words that speak of our participation of Jesus’ death and

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resurrection, our new birth by the Holy Spirit and our forgiveness of sins.⁶ If the chrism is to be consecrated the prayer offered reads in part, "... those who are sealed with (this consecrated oil) may share in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ ..."⁷ These prayers are followed with the blessing of the water and the actions of the rite, the washing with water and the anointing with consecrated oil in the name of the Holy Spirit, which includes the actions of the sign of the cross and the laying on of hands and the proclamation that they are "... sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever."⁸ These words, which conclude the action of the rite itself, underscore the theology of the rite that is found in the opening rubrics. The newly baptized are then welcomed into the household of God, charged with confessing the faith of Christ and invited to share with the community in Christ's eternal priesthood.⁹ The liturgy continues with the newly baptized joining in celebration and full participation of the Eucharist as the initial act of their membership in the royal priesthood of Christ.

Bishop Joe Morris Doss, writes that the "rediscovered baptismal theology of scripture and the early church affirms the foundation of the church's ministry and equality of status among the baptized." When the church met in General Convention in 1979 and voted to accept the new prayer book, it also voted to ordain women. This was not a coincidence, but rather the result of the church being led to this decision by the baptismal theology that had now been established in the BCP.¹⁰ When the church met in convention in 2009 they once again turned to the liturgy of the rite of baptism in the BCP to find the theology of the church and pronounced that all of the church's sacraments are open to all baptized persons. As ECUSA moves forward into the 21st Century the theology of its rite of baptism has encompassed the reception of communion by children before confirmation, the ordination of women, gays and lesbians as bishops, priests and deacons and is led by a female presiding bishop. The 1979 BCP's theology of baptism has at its core the belief that baptism by water is full inclusion in the church and cannot be undone, all who are baptized are joined together in the royal priesthood of Christ, where the affirmation of the

ministries of all of her members as well as respecting their dignity is at the core of the church's growth, renewal and mission.

1 Mitchell, Lionel, *The Way We Pray An Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer*.

(Cincinnati; Forward Movement Publications, 1984.)p14.

2 Associated Parishes, *Ministry I: Holy Baptism* (Alexandria, Associated Parishes, 1978.)p10. Emphasis in the original. Organized in the late 1940s, Associated Parishes members played a major role in drafting and promoting the *1979 Book of Common Prayer*.

3 ECUSA *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York; Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979.)p298.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. p306.

6 Mitchell, Lionel, *The Way We Pray An Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer*.p28.

7 ECUSA *The Book of Common Prayer*. p307.

8 Ibid. p308.

9 Ibid.p308.

10 Doss, The Right Revered Joe Morris, *Anglican Communion in Conflict: Two Movements for Change, Consultation on Baptismal Theology*, 2007. <http://www.BishopDoss.com>.

(accessed January 24, 2011). Bishop Doss is a longtime member of Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission (APLM)and currently serves as a Council AssociateMember, in addition to serving on APLM's second baptismal consultation, mandated by the Presiding Bishop and the 2009 General Convention of ECUSA.

From the Bookshelf

By Cap Hanson

The Complete Retirement Survival Guide includes everything one needs to safeguard your money, your health and your independence. This new book may be located on the Self-improvement shelf of our library.

The winter editions of ***Forward Day by Day*** have been placed on the tract rack adjacent to the library entry. The pamphlets, as well as all materials on the tract rack, are free; however, donations are appreciated. The meditations are also available on the Forward Movement website.

Books you may have forgotten about, or couldn't find:

Katharine Jefferts Schori: ***The Heartbeat of God***

Jane Gross: ***A Bittersweet Season:***

Caring for Our Aging Parents--and Ourselves

Brian McLaren: ***A New Kind of Christianity***

Thomas L. Friedman: ***Hot, Flat and Crowded***

Philip Yancey: ***Prayer: Does it make any difference?***

The sometimes controversial Bishop Spong has recently authored another book, titled ***Reclaiming the Bible for a Non-religious World***. The renowned bishop designed his book to take readers into the contemporary academic debate about the Bible.

Reading materials for the Lenten season are prominently displayed on a separate bookcase. Of the two dozen volumes available, here are five suggestions:

With Christ in the Wilderness

Lent and Easter—Prayer at Home

Lenten Prayers for Busy People

God's Enduring Presence

Easter Ideals (Secular)



KARLA
STANDRIDGE
COLE

MUSIC
DIRECTOR

Variations on a theme

As we talked about the Traveler Journal in our

staff meetings and planned what their focus might be in the coming months, I was somewhat taken aback. How does one tie baptism to music, exactly? “Wade in the Water” and “Shall We Gather at the River” notwithstanding, there’s not a lot of direct correlation there.

Okay, okay, liturgy – that’s better. Even if it’s a really big subject, at least I can see my way to connecting some musical dots. There will likely be explanations of what liturgy is and why we do it elsewhere in these pages, so you don’t need my inexpert take on the broad topic. But what you might find interesting is the way that the church musician sifts and culls and chooses music to support the liturgy.

Now I hold the Presiding Bishop’s Certificate in Church Music, which is just a fancy way of saying that I spent two years going to classes and thinking about how music supports the liturgy, along with writing a really long paper detailing my own philosophy of church music. So I dug that paper up in search of fodder for this article; and in reading it after the intervening years, I discovered that I’ve changed. I used to be quite the purist and was pretty rigid about what music was appropriate for the church and what should be relegated to Cursillo. But our culture has changed a lot in these intervening years as well. For better or ill, we are less formal; and our worship feeds souls that hunger for meaning and connection between Sunday worship and the rest of the week. So I’m a lot less musically snobby now and think of myself less as the music educator and more as the music facilitator. I’ve come to enjoy a more collaborative process of preparing music and my definition of “appropriate music for worship” has broadened considerably. Perhaps the biggest change - I’ve begun to think that the musician *serves* the parish more than instructs it in the proper ways of church music.

So this “servant musician” joins a community of worshippers and, rather than immediately steering toward the “way we should worship”, puts a damp finger to the wind and listens. The parish has a body of hymns and service music that they know and love. And individuals in the parish have particular favorites or

things they hope to never hear again. Some folks never request a favorite, others slip notes in the mailbox, send their spouse to comment at coffee hour, or make regular weekly assessments of what they liked or didn’t. Choir and clergy have an even more direct line and vote early and often on their likes and dislikes. Sometimes one person will sidle up with a favorite and the very next sidle-er says please let us not sing *that* again. And the servant musician listens and ponders all these things.

And the musician comes with his or her own perspective, too. I was raised in the Bible belt, in a Missouri Lutheran church where we had Bach and Buxtehude upstairs with an enormous pipe organ and “This Little Light of Mine” and “What a Friend we have in Jesus” downstairs in the Sunday School. Add to that an African-American teacher for Texas History who introduced us to the stories and the pathos behind the spirituals; and a classical music education that honed my skills and my sensibilities. Then too, I’ve worked with priests who pushed the edge of the envelope and those who were über traditional and I’ve navigated within those perimeters. All of you come with your own sensibilities as well. Some of you are cradle Episcopalians and some of *you* are über traditional. Some of you come from other traditions; some long for the music you heard as a child; some wish for more cutting edge, contemporary styles. And yet, we all worship together. We make up a mosaic of preferences and longings. Up close, the mosaic is a bunch of individual, different colored stones. Step back and you’ll see us as we are, a beautiful picture of a worshipping family of God. And perhaps that image of the mosaic is evocative of our liturgical worship as well - a panoply of color and mood - meditative, mournful, calm, quietly joyful, jubilant - and all of these moods evocative of the passing of the seasons and the lectionary readings.

A parish has its own culture and while St. Christopher’s doesn’t pretend to be high church like the cathedral, it isn’t exactly snake’s belly low, either. We have our standards after all. So we would be a broad church, with elements from both the high and low church tents. And I think our music should reflect that. In the 2000 odd years since Christ ascended into heaven and the disciples set about being the church, we’ve seen dozens of musical styles come along. The history of art music parallels that of the church almost exclusively until

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praying about that test drive, and look forward to finalizing the shape of our new service. All of us are fed spiritually in different ways, and at times, what used to feed us spiritually needs to be changed, as we change and grow and mature in our lives. This type of alternative service is meant to provide an outlet for, or, perhaps more apropos, an inlet into our souls to allow us to hear and experience God and worship and liturgy in new and different ways. An individual who attended the Epiphany service said, *I thought I was completely satisfied attending the morning Eucharist. I never thought this kind of service would have an impact on me, but it did!* If we allow ourselves the opportunity to experience new things, new ways to worship, sometimes we will find that God can speak to us in ways we never thought possible.

We will be utilizing Rite I for Eucharist, five times a year at the 8 AM service: the five Sundays this year that are a “fifth” Sunday of the month. We have made this shift because of the importance of being welcoming to newcomers, who, all congregational development studies have shown, find the language and the theology behind the liturgy in Rite I, off-putting and unfriendly. The Episcopal Church has moved beyond, away from, the deep atonement and sinful language utilized in Rite I. In our forthright attempts at growing this church, anything that keeps people away needs to be carefully looked at and considered. Allowing a Rite I Eucharist, five times a year, gives respect to our history without letting it control our future and endangering our growth.

During the Season of Lent, we will explore the riches of Morning Prayer, Rite II during the service of the Word portion of Eucharist at the 8 AM service. Exploring the wideness and the richness of our Prayer Book, and of our history, helps to remind us of the deep sense of spirituality that comes from the daily practice of Morning Prayer. Saying those ancient prayers and canticles can and will change the manner in which we experience worship and is something we can all “take on” in Lent.

Also during the Season of Lent we will have a service called “Way of the Cross and Holy Eucharist.” This Friday evening service, at 6:15 PM, which will be offered each and every Friday in Lent, is a quiet, meditative service, where we will move around the Nave to eight stations of the cross, saying prayers and hearing short readings. The

service will end gathered around our common table for a Eucharistic Meal. This service is offered for individuals who are looking for a spiritual experience during Lent that can help deepen the meaning of this Season.

And to round out our Lenten journey together, Holy Week will be filled with opportunities to mark this season. A Healing Eucharist will be offered on Monday and Tuesday evenings, a service entitled Tenebrae will occur on Wednesday. These will be followed by the Triduum (The Great Three Days): Maundy Thursday (with service of Holy Eucharist, foot washing and stripping of the altar), Good Friday, and The Great Easter Vigil on Saturday evening. We will, of course, have Easter Morning services as well. Truly marking Holy Week as special, different, important, are the reasons for these added services.

Our hope is that these varied services will allow each and every St. Christopherite find an important and spiritual connection between themselves and the Holy One to whom we owe all that we have.

We also hope that you enjoy our new publication, the *Traveler Journal!*

God’s Blessings and Peace,

John*

A Morning Resolve

From *Forward Day by Day*, submitted by Cap Hanson. His comment: “Worthy of a reprint.”

I will try this day to live a simple, sincere and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God.

In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right.

And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit.



MARION
HUNNER

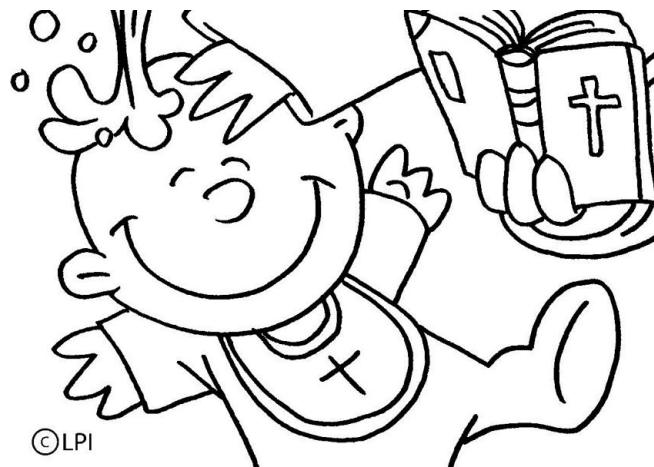
CHILDREN'S
MINISTRIES
DIRECTOR

Remembering the Baptism of Our Children

On January 22nd, those children who stayed for the annual meeting experienced the wonder of the sacrament of baptism through a Godly Play lesson. We baptize people in the name of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in this lesson we use the names of Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer to show that the Trinity is about much more than gender. We offer images of action – pouring of water for the Creator, lighting of the Christ Candle for the Redeemer and images of a dove and the invisible

scent of oil for the Sustainer. The children had an opportunity to reflect on the sacrament of baptism, and even share what they remember and/or know about their own baptism.

The baptism of our children is a very special event in our own lives. We stand up and promise to be responsible for seeing that our children are brought up in the Christian life and faith, and to help them grow into the full stature of Christ by our prayers and witness. Yet, for most of them, they are too young to remember this special day, and these important promises. I have gathered some suggestions of ways to celebrate the anniversary of your child's baptism – making this day special to them (if you're not sure of the date, contact the church where your child was baptized).



On the anniversary of your child's baptism, you may want to ...

1. Bring out the scrapbook/photo album/video of your child's baptism. Discuss promises that were made on their behalf and the important people that took part in the celebration.
2. Invite godparents over (or call/email/write to them). Say a special prayer for the child's godparents.
3. Visit the church where the child was baptized.
4. Small children can pretend to baptize their babies. . . set up a station in the kitchen with lots of babies, electric candles, a bucket of water, fake oil, etc.
5. Light your child's baptismal candle
6. Say a special prayer:
 - a. Loving God, you created all the people of the world, and you know each of us by name. We thank you for (name), who celebrates the anniversary of her baptism. Bless her with your love and friendship that she may grow in wisdom, knowledge and grace. May she love her family always, and be ever faithful to her friends.
 - b. Place your hands on head of shoulders of one being blessed:
May God, in whose presence our ancestors walked, bless you ... Amen
May god, who has been your shepherd from birth, keep you Amen
May God, who saves you from all harm, give you peace... Amen

Whether you use the ideas here or not, I hope that you find meaningful traditions for your family to continue to celebrate the day that your child was initiated by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body and the church.

Variations... (Continued from page 5)

the beginning of the Renaissance in the mid 1500s. Even from then until now, a significant number of musicians and composers have been employed by the church, writing choral and organ music and hymns, and in the 20th century, worship songs, praise choruses and Gospel music. We've seen the presentation of that music go from voices accompanied by Old Testament instruments like psalteries and ram's horns to ever larger organs and orchestral instruments to amplified guitars, keyboards and drums. Our choirs sing the oldest Gregorian chants, elegant polyphony from Palestrina and Victoria, intricate choruses from Bach and Handel, lush harmonies from Brahms and Mendelssohn as well as poignant dissonances and strident rhythms from more modern composers. There are hymn-anthems, motets, fugues and counterpoint, Anglican chant and chants and hymns from Taizé and Iona, spirituals, Southern hymns and Gospel music, praise and worship, indigenous global music – all to sing our prayer and praise to God. The music we use to worship God is a gift we've given over time to God, as well as to ourselves. It comes in all stripes and in all languages. Even the English language has varying shades and intonations that place the piece in time. We are but one little blip on that timeline and soon enough, what we have determined is "the right way" will be superseded by another generation's right way. So really, we are just a few pieces of that mosaic.

Remember my sidle-ers? One loves a particular piece that the other one loathes, and in order to honor one wish, you must ignore the other. Or at least you have to juggle people's wishes on any given Sunday. They are important pieces of the mosaic as well. Take one piece away and you've altered the whole. One of my colleagues maintains that by employing this broad palette of styles, you give everyone something to hate. But I maintain that it's something to love. If a certain hymn or style isn't to your taste, perhaps it's what someone else loves and your turn will come later. And as we love our fellow worshippers and care for them, we look for the love in the offertory that we don't understand, or the Taizé chant that goes on too long, or the hymn that seems old and dusty. And then we soak up all the love in our favorite hymns and relish singing them with our faith community that sings and loves so well.

Karla Cole

Liturgy... (Continued from page 2)

What I found was plain, and yet deep in the power of the liturgy. I found a church building that was long on atmosphere—the banners, the rich wood, the candles, incense, and rich tapestries on altar and ambo (pulpit/lectern combo). I found a liturgy that was deep and rich, thoughtful and imaginative, time-worn and yet new to me. The words didn't jump off the page, rather they invited me in. The people were also 'rich'—black and white worshipping together side by side. And they were intellectual, creative, interesting, with lives that glistened with diversity and worldliness. They were welcoming without being pushy. They were open and reserved; they were community. All this was found in a conservative Southern town near Selma, Alabama. In short, the Episcopal Church was all the things that church had not been up until that point in life.

The Episcopal Church was my first deep and ongoing exposure to a liturgical church. What does it mean to be liturgical? The Reverend Dr. Leonel Mitchell says,

"[Liturgy] is literally the work of the people" While it might apply to all the BCP services, "liturgy means more than a book. It is the way we worship God. We speak of the central place the liturgy occupies in our lives, meaning the central place where public worship of God, and particularly the eucharist, has in the lives of practicing Christians...." (*The Way We Pray: An Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer Leonel Mitchell, Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1997 p. 9-10*)

People might argue whether the liturgy is the chicken or the egg. Does the liturgy shape the people who pray it; or is it the worshipping community gathered in love and respect that prays a liturgy into existence that imbues their values. To which I would say, "Yes." I came into a community gathered that was on the cusp of moving from the 1928 BCP to the interim "Zebra" book. The Zebra book with its new liturgies was different indeed. I watched week by week as people hiccupped over the responses, and had to pay close attention to where they were on the page—obviously a new exercise.

What I found was a collection of seekers. There was my English professor (later a deacon), my Journalism professor, and my Music professor. Those were the voices to which I listened daily in school, and now I could see them kneeling before my God, humbling themselves in the presence of the Almighty. It was far more inspiring than any lecture, or any demonstration of faculty power. They were working out their faith in a very physical and tactile way, in addition to a spiritual seeking. Not only could I watch, I could participate with them. I was invited as an equal in their journey. It was

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Liturgy... (Continued from page 8)

then I realized the power of liturgy to welcome the stranger. I was that stranger.

As many young people, I did not find the time to attend church weekly. But I never regularly attended any other church once I found the Episcopal Church. Regardless the town, I always have found the Episcopal Church inviting (the people sometimes more or less so). As I began to be shaped by the Church and the liturgy, I understood more fully how I felt connected to the Anglican community, and found renewed pathways to God. Within that, I began to shape how I felt called to be part of the fullness of the faithful. Jumping ahead, I want to share how the ABCs welcomed me.

Absolution—the sign of God’s forgiveness after our confession of sins. Sin was big in the Baptist church. The focus was always on our sinfulness and the ways we were separated from God. The weekly ‘altar call’ was an invitation to accept our shortcomings and repent and return to the Lord. The spiritual movement is not theologically incorrect. But the execution of that in my home church always emphasized the unworthiness of humans, the overwhelming power (read: inaccessibility) of God/Jesus, and the inevitability that we will always fail. Guilt, shame, unworthiness, hopelessness and futility were the emotions that evoked in me. Absolution reminds me that humans are created in the image of God, to be ‘like’ God. Absolution affirms that I am part of the solution, not just part of the problem. Each time we come to the Confession and Absolution, I can be still, remember who and whose I am, and be grateful for God’s embrace of us.

Blessing—a priest acquaintance once bitterly remarked that if those liberals had their way, the Episcopal Church would wind up blessing everything. Yeah? Blessing is the outward and visible sign of God’s favor toward us and our efforts. Whether the baby in the womb over whom we offer a quick word, our beloved animal companions we bring to St. Francis services; or the union of two people who love each other, blessing is about affirming goodness and graciousness. Our Bible tells us repeatedly that God seeks relationship, desires intimacy with us, and reaches out to breach the gulf when WE stray. How can we do less than offer God’s sign of reconciliation and restoration to those who faithfully turn to God? Blessing is a reminder that God stands present to our situations, cares more deeply for us than we can ask or imagine, and holds that truth up for us. God is more forgiving than we, and I am delighted to be able to revel in it. There is

no greater privilege than standing before a congregation of God’s beloved and offering a sign of God’s blessing. It is humbling indeed.

Consecration—the invitation of the Holy Spirit to be fully present in our sacramental meal each and every time we celebrate together. Liturgy is the work of the people—all the people. It takes a multitude of people to gather and offer thanks. It’s work—an event carefully planned. And when all is readied, we invite the Holy Spirit to be in our midst and celebrate with us. Again, my professor, Leonel Mitchell says:

“Christianity is not a religion to be practiced by individuals in their solitariness. It is a way of living as a new people that involves relationships among other Christians....[Celebration of the Eucharist] has always been at its center. It is not that worship is a substitute for life, but rather that it is the core and focal point of a common life....from God, through Christ, in the Spirit-filled Church, we receive the power and strength to be the people of God....It is the *synaxis*, the gathering together of the people of God for corporate worship, which is the heart and soul of the Church’s life. *The Way We Pray: An Introduction to the Book of Common Prayer* Leonel Mitchell, Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1997 p. 10

Our worship is about all of us together, giving of the gifts we have. The act of consecration is not about my ‘hands’, nor the goodness of any one of us. It is about the power of the Holy Trinity to be present in all the world at any time. I offer the prayers on behalf of the worshipping community, not because I am better, but because I am one of you.

In the course of a week or month or year, there are so many other things priests are called to be and do. (Yes, we do work more than three hours on Sunday morning.) However, there is nothing more precious than to be able to stand before you and offer Absolution and Blessing, and to Consecrate on your behalf. Continually offering these prayers and regularly acting as an agent has transformed me. I hope I have gained wisdom. I know my soul has become deeper and broader.

The liturgy has invited me in. It has a welcoming space to explore, to challenge assumptions, to weep and cheer, to be stilled and comforted. It is a place to find God. It is a manifestation of the diversity God has created (and therefore, is present in God). It has been a powerful shaper in making me who I am. I don’t imagine I could have maintained enough integrity to live without the liturgy of the Episcopal Church. I believe a significant part of my call is to keep our liturgy accessible for others who need to be broken open, shaped, and called by, in and through it while worshipping in the midst of a loving community. That is a call to which I continually say, “Yes!”

THANKSGIVINGS AND CELEBRATIONS

February Birthdays:

- 1 Christopher Mayr
Jane Suilman
- 2 Dan Brown
- 3 Russ Blankenfeld
Maxine Kuehnel
Kelly Peterson
- 5 Pam Hove
Jill Miel
- 6 Mary Armitage
Joshua Bayer
James Roemer
- 8 Delores Hartzell
- 9 Wendy Brilowski
Jacqueline Hanna
Wyatte Pearson
- 11 Jean Brown
- 12 Lindsey Erickson
- 16 Carolyn Carlson
Cora Lacher
Julia Lacher
Pat Liener
- 18 Brian Walters
- 19 Robert Allen
Karin Brown
Jay Jordahl
- 20 Linda Bergum
Jackson Humes
- 22 Bill Welch
- 23 Pete Snyder
- 25 Steven Hartman



- Larry Jones
- 11 Yvonne Kurtz
Verna Rusler
- 12 Janet Henquinet
Allison Jensen
- 14 Liz Pryor
- 15 Ken Ives
Lisa Spiro
Ruth Thillen
- 17 Michael Wittmann
Millie Woodbury
Margaret Zaro
- 18 Karen Machlica
- 19 Brooke Bacon
Lynn Baxter
- 20 Ana Dobon
Dave hammer
Nancy Powers
Beverley Webster
- 22 Bill Brown
Megan Crow
Elaine Erickson
Junxia Li
- 23 Bob Curtis
- 26 Cheryl Bailey
Dick Rajcic
- 27 Suzanne James
- 28 Andrew Fortmeyer
Rebekah Roemer
Larry Yan
- 29 John Brandt
Lucas Monahan
Ryan Terry
Allison Weiker
Jocelynn Wittmann
- 31 Jeff Whitehurst



- 6 Matthew Anderson
- 7 Wanda Copeland
Dick Pryor
- 8 Paul Bauer
Rick Darnell
Malcolm Evans
Nancy Foster
Christine Hennessey
- Marilyn Jedinak
- 9 Ann DePaolis-Jones
Ruby Harkcom
Kimberly Hutchens
- 13 Betty Sheppard
- 15 Bendu Seth
- 16 David Ingram
- 17 Jean Crow
Tyler Spiro
- 18 Christian Erickson
Ned Hanna
Claire Parsons
- 19 Matilda Kavaney
- 21 Henry Hoover
Harry McCarty
Bruce Moland
- 23 Emma Jones
Sebrom Morris, III
- 24 Thomas Kirby
- 25 Christopher Huntley
- 26 Julie Remington
Joseph Seth
Ryan Slechta
- 27 Andrew Nowacki
- 28 Garrett Drake
Joshua Hanna
- 30 Georgia Howie
Ron Pearson



March Birthdays:

- 1 Jill Eischens
- 4 Frances Boston
- 5 Heather Koenen
Christopher Moland
Pat Thiers
- 6 Jeanne Frischman
- 7 Karen Rajcic
Eugene Zurn
- 10 Eleanor Anderson

April Birthdays:

- 2 Bruce Warkentien
Barbara Wilkinson
- 3 Amy Anderson
- 4 Bjorn Walters
- 5 Karen Hartman

“Watch over your children, O Lord, as their days increase; bless and guide them wherever they may be...”

BCP p. 830

February Anniversaries:



- 1 John & Lyn Lawyer
- 11 Jerry & Lynn Baxter
- 12 Robert & Janet Harrison
- 14 Richard & Lois Zwieg
- 17 Gesine & Robert Addyman, Jr.
- 18 Henry & Jean Hoover
- 28 Jay & Barb Jordahl

March Anniversaries:

- 10 Judy & Bill Welch
- 11 Harold & Barb Danley
- 16 Roger & Barbara DeRoo
- 19 Ned & Sandra Hanna
- 26 Robin Monahan
& Rebecca Lucas
- 27 Dan & Kathy Brown

April Anniversaries:

- 9 Bill & Jean Brown
- 9 Daniel Humes & Cheryl Bailey
- 18 Margot & Garrett Drake
- 30 Christopher & Katie Moland

Send your blessings upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace.

BCP p. 431

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Non-Traditional Eucharist
 Sunday evenings at 5:30 beginning February 12
Ash Wednesday
 February 22
Lenten Soup Supper & Programs
 THURSDAYS in Lent
Watch the e-TRAVELER for details!


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The St. Christopher's TRAVELER



DEADLINES
 Traveler FIRST Monday of preceding month
 Weekly Christ-o-Gram TUESDAY of each week
Your submissions to these publications are welcome!

DO YOU HAVE PRAYER REQUESTS? Please call the office or leave a note in the Deacon's mailbox. The name(s) you submit will be placed on the next Sunday prayer list.

DO YOU NEED PASTORAL CARE? If you experience illness, hospitalization, death in the family, or other family crisis, call the church office 651-633-4589; or the after-hours emergency number at 651-633-4598.