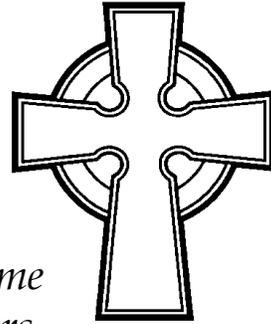


ApostlesJournal



*"The gifts the Lord gave were that some
would be ... pastors and teachers,
to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ."*

(Ephesians 4:11-12)

Church of The Apostles

Evangelical Anglican

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Church of The Apostles
Evangelical Anglican

*We are
Christians
who Worship
in the
Anglican Tradition.*

*Our Mission
is to
Obey,
Follow
and
Bear Witness
to
Jesus Christ.*

Church of The Apostles is a member of the
Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.



Welcome to the ApostlesJournal!

On behalf of the Elders, I welcome you to this first edition of the ApostlesJournal. This publication, which has been in the planning for nearly a year, has been designed by the Board of Elders of the Church of The Apostles to replace the former publication that was long known in our Congregation (and our predecessor body) as *The Messenger*.

With the advent several years ago of the highly successful and well received publication here at the Church of The Apostles known as the *Church Notes*, which highlights “news, events and notes of interest” in our Congregation, it soon became evident to me and the other Elders that the old *Messenger* format had become antiquated.

The ApostlesJournal is a theological and pastoral journal that will be written by the Elders of the Church of The Apostles and which shall be published some four to six times a year from this point forward.

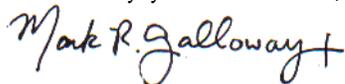
In his Letter to Titus, Saint Paul states that each *Presbuteros* (“Elder”) in the Congregation must “*be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also [be able] to rebuke those who contradict it*” (1:9). In his First Letter to Timothy, the Apostle says that the *Episkopos* (“Bishop” or “Superintendent”) of the Congregation must be “*able to teach*” (3:2). And in his Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul famously wrote: “*the gifts the Lord gave were that some would be ... pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*” (4:11-12).

The articles that are to be found in each edition of the ApostlesJournal will be placed here in the hope and trust that they will truly help us Elders in our vocation as pastors and teachers “*to equip the saints for the work of ministry.*”

On behalf of my fellow Elders, I want to specifically thank our talented Communications Officer here at Church of The Apostles, Barbara Bickerstaff, for her advice, hard work and vision, all of which were essential in the formation of this new work.

As an Elders’ Board we are pleased to be able to offer these writings to all of you – our beloved sisters and brothers in Christ – and we are grateful for the opportunity to be able to share the Gospel with you in this manner.

I am sincerely yours in Christ,



Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

Be still and know that I am God

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

For the better part of the past year, I have been doing in my life what one might call some major (and in my case certainly a long overdue) “spiritual inventory.” This process, which I believe has been overt and subtle, conscious and unconscious, has not been an easy undertaking (in fact it has been down right painful at times), but one that has been absolutely necessary in my mid-life journey. Indeed, in certain seasons of every believer’s life such an undertaking will be necessary.

How have I gone about this undertaking? My “process” over these many months has more or less gone as follows:

First, (with my date book in hand), I looked back over the past two years or more of my life and revisited in my mind all those things that I have done and left undone. I also re-read past copies of the *Church Notes* and *The Messenger* and several of my sermons and began to think about what has happened both within our Congregation and within my family and personal and spiritual life as well.

As I went along in this journey, in an eventual spirit of stillness and honesty, I wrote down the many ways God has entered into my life: the surprises, the joys, the jolts and crises, and I looked anew for those moments of grace that had inevitably interrupted and supported me in all my doings.

Secondly, in a quiet spirit of repentance

(which I must admit took me awhile to sincerely enter), I

contemplated all the times I “*have sinned and fall[en] short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). I thought about all the relationships in my life in which I have not given a full effort, the ways in which I have wandered from my principles of faith.

I thought a lot about how I could have done so much better or handled several situations more effectively in my vocation as a husband, father, son, brother, neighbor, disciple and pastor. When could I have been more open or receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit? When or where did my pride block or impede the will of God? What would God have me learn from these experiences?

Thirdly, I asked myself, what are my concerns – the unfinished projects, non-implemented goals, all those things left undone? What are the immoral things that bother me about me at this point in my life? What are the real issues I am facing in the various tasks that God has given me to do? Am I prepared to handle them? What condition is my interior prayer life in? And am I even remotely sound in a holistic manner – body, mind and spirit?

I wrote all these things out several times on pieces of paper and came back to them time and again so that I could stand back and see with clarity what really is. And each time I returned I acquired a more accurate view of who I am – and thus a better grip upon the fact of who I want to be.

Then fourthly, after, with sincere effort, having been through steps one through three,

I asked God, time and again in a spirit of prayer, to “*create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:11). When I honestly engaged in this fourth step, it was only then that I could continue to ask my final questions before God. What is really the most important thing to me in this life? What is emerging as a priority for action now? What concerns (big or small), worries and fears, do I need to surrender to our Triune God and offer up at the foot of the cross?

Having journeyed now this far in my “process”, I believe God has listened to my pleas as he always promises to do and that he has in his Word reminded me to once again simply receive and (as the Psalmist writes) believe in his counsel: “*Be still...and know that I am God*” (Psalm 46:11).

Having heard the LORD’s counsel, I am, therefore, as this summer of 2010 stretches out before me, pledging to continue and to complete my “spiritual inventory” (if that is even possible!). Further, I have committed myself to put into practice a new action plan in my life for the fall of 2010, which is this: to keep things as simple and as uncluttered as possible.

Finally, as I have reflected upon the results of my “spiritual inventory” thus far, I have come to realize that in going through this process I have learned again how important it is for me to focus on my blessings – there are so many: family and friends, and the loving care that surrounds me on every side! I realize how fortunate I am to be me, who I am and what I am, in my relationship to the Triune God, to my wife, children,

grandchild, parents, siblings, family, friends, and the wonderful people of this fellowship affectionately called the Church of The Apostles.

In today’s world it too often feels like we Christians are constantly moving at hyper speed. Between work and so-called play, various activities and much programming, it seems that our lives are just way to complex and perhaps even out of control at times. Sometimes we get so busy it appears that we literally do not have enough hours in a day or enough energy to accomplish all those things we think we must.

For many of us, our professional lives demand our time and we drown in a sea of paper and email. For most of us our houses are full of stuff we constantly purchase but hardly ever use, our closets are packed with clothes and shoes we will never wear. Our attention is constantly vied for by cell phones and texting, the media’s constant barrage, the endless ploys of advertising campaigns, political crises, and economic chaos.

When will we find time for our families? When will we find time for our relationships, especially our relationship with the Triune God? A simpler and less cluttered life is not an end all for all that ails us in this culture, but it can certainly help us refocus on what is truly important in the lives of Christians and help us to break the chains of consumerism which have such a strong hold on us all. Indeed, a simpler life can be a way for us to prioritize our being and it can be the way for us to take back control from the ways of the world, the flesh and the devil.

I believe the words of the old Shaker hymn
has it right when it says,

‘Tis the gift to be simple, ‘tis the gift to be free,
‘tis the gift to come down where you ought to be,
and when we find ourselves in the place just right,
‘twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained
to bow and to bend we shan’t be ashamed,
to turn, turn, will be our delight
till by turning, turning,
we come round right.

This summer I invite you to take a look at
your lives and begin to examine them
through the lens of a powerful process called
“spiritual inventory.” What you can do to
simplify your life? Why not try and make

room for those things that really matter in
your earthly pilgrimage—especially room for
your life in the Triune God, your
families and your neighbors?

Jesus said, “*The truth will set you
free*” (John 8:32). Talk about being
created new! To be free in the grace
of Christ means that you and I can
meet reality with greater strength,
new insight and fresh power!

I am put in mind of the words of the
great hymn: Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning, born of the one light,
Eden saw play! Praise with elation, praise
every morning, God’s recreation, of the new
day!

*Oh Lord,
Thou didst
Strike my Heart
with
Thy Word
and
I loved Thee.*

Augustine of Hippo
(354-430)

Church of The Apostles: A Once and Future Church

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

In 1974 Loren B. Mead, a priest of the Episcopal Church and a pioneer in the sociological and demographic study of predominately Protestant congregations in the United States, founded the Alban Institute (an ecumenical think tank that provides to congregations services which historically had not been provided to them by the various denominational structures). In 1991 Mead published a best selling book (which has since become something of a classic in biblically orthodox Anglican circles) called, The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier. In his book Mead argued that the nature of denominational life in Western Church culture was in the final throws of completing a profound and even radical social and communal paradigm shift.

The Apostolic Paradigm

In *The Once and Future Church*, Mead identified three distinguishable paradigms in the history of the Universal Church's life and mission. The first is the paradigm of the apostolic period. In the early Church, Mead states, the local Congregation—that is, Christ's holy bride—was conscious of her existence in a hostile, antagonistic and persecuting world. The early Christians saw themselves as called out of the Roman Empire's society of darkness and sin into a new life of light and holiness. Life in the early Church was intense and personal and each of her baptized members was aware that they were called to give witness to the Good

News of God in Christ even in the midst of a world that hated their message. Indeed, they did faithfully rise to the Apostle Peter's challenge: *"always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you"* (1 Peter 3:15).

According to Mead, the key element in identifying the nature of the Universal Church's life is the nature of her "mission." The early Church saw her mission field as her front door. The mission of proclaiming by word and example the Good News was a task for every member of the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9). Each autonomous local Congregation in the "apostolic paradigm" sought to build up the courage, strength and skill of her faithful to engage in such divine mission.

The Christendom Paradigm

In *The Once and Future Church*, Mead claims that a new paradigm emerged following the Emperor Constantine's conversion and with the ensuing proclamation in the year 313 of the Edict of Milan, which decriminalized the Christian Faith. Thus, Christianity became (virtually overnight), in name and law, the official religion of the Roman Empire. In this "Christendom paradigm" (as Mead calls it), there was no longer a clear distinction between the world and the Church as there had been in the apostolic paradigm. The Church no longer existed in a hostile environment. "Mission" became something that happened not at the front door of each Congregation through the efforts of every

member of the body but at the frontier of the Empire by specialist missionaries sent to convert heathen tribes and nations.

In the Christendom paradigm, the congregational episcopacies (that is, each autonomous local Congregation) of the former apostolic paradigm ceased being a self-governing expression of the fullness of the Church Universal—an assembly with her own bishop, presbyters, deacons and the baptized serving in collegial function as the body of Christ. Rather, what emerged was a new ecclesial designation that came to be known as the “parish” and which in turn was a subsidiary of a Roman geographical territory called a “diocese.” The parish was served not by a bishop with the presbyters and deacons in function (as in the congregational episcopacy of the apostolic paradigm) but by a single clergyman now identified as a “priest” and who served as the sole pastor. People now became part of their local parish and thus a “Christian,” not by conversion to Christ, but by birth. The parish priest became an employee of the state and the official chaplain to the citizenry of the town in which he served. For all people of the Roman Empire, being a “Christian” was understood to be the same thing as being a good citizen, obedient to the system of government. The civil law was seen as describing and enforcing the values of the Christian Faith. Christian and secular dimensions of society were no longer clearly distinguishable as they had been in the apostolic paradigm.

“People now became ... a ‘Christian,’ not by conversion to Christ, but by birth.”

In *The Once and Future Church* Mead rightly argues (I believe) that the overwhelming majority of people in twentieth-century Western society who considered themselves to be “Christian” grew up in and accepted the principles of the Christendom paradigm. And such people continue to believe (I would argue) that being a “Christian” is the same as being “a good person.” “Mission,” on the other hand, for people of the Christendom paradigm is still believed to be something which happens “at the edges of the Empire” – in places like Africa and other exotic destinations where “only fundamentalist

Baptist missionaries and zealous Catholic priests and nuns want to go.”

When I examine in detail the life of the early Church—the apostolic paradigm—a number of defining qualities set her apart from the Christendom paradigm. Chief amongst these differences are the personal disciplines that figured regularly in the day-to-day life of the early Christians. These disciplines not only distinguished each Christian Congregation from the surrounding culture but often resulted in ridicule and persecution by the Roman authorities. Strikingly, the disciplined life exemplified by these early Christians in word and deed attracted tens of thousands within that pluralistic and hedonistic pagan environment to the truth of the Gospel.

In addition to personal discipline, the ordered life of the early Church, both in the community at large and in the immediate family, revealed another distinct difference

between the Congregation and the culture. The mutual respect for everyone within the priesthood of believers, regardless of socio-economic status, was unheard of in the Roman Empire. This was especially true when it came to those who were most vulnerable and indefensible in the community, such as the unborn, young children and women.

As I examine the present position of the mainline Protestant churches and contemporary American culture, things do not appear any different from the early Church and Roman culture, except in one fundamental aspect. While the contemporary culture mirrors largely that of the Roman Empire, the contemporary institutionalized denominations are virtually indistinguishable from Western culture. In fact, many within these churches endorse actively the pluralism and hedonism manifest in our culture, a legacy of a cruel post-modernist theology. Most people (I would argue) within the contemporary mainline churches have in their personal lives lost any distinctiveness from the culture. And this is because these same people have never possessed the mind of Christ. In the truest sense they suffer from amnesia; they no longer know who or what Christians really are.

Every biblically orthodox Congregation is a true representation of the body of Christ. And as such are called by the Scriptures to be in complete conformity to the will of Christ who is her Head, just as our Lord was in complete conformity with the will of his Father. Only in this way can the Church of The Apostles or any other Congregation be the needed "salt" and "light" within the

surrounding culture. When a Congregation conforms to the world, it then becomes, as Jesus said, salt without taste: *"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear"* (Luke 14:34-35).

The New Paradigm

Mead was truly one of the first voices from within the mainline Protestant churches in the West (and particularly in the United States) to emphatically state that the Christendom paradigm (which had carried the day for nearly seventeen centuries) had long ago ceased to be an effective model for the furtherance of the Gospel, and that a new paradigm was not only emerging but had in all actuality already arrived.

Mead boldly pointed out the fact that (by 1991) the American culture in which true biblically orthodox Christians were mingled could no longer be considered one that in any way, shape or form mirrors the values and beliefs of the apostolic Church. No longer could it be assumed that the overwhelming majority of people born into Western culture would actually live their lives as "Christians." Hence, Mead argued, the visible Church of Christ, the local Congregation, that is, that place where the pure Word of God in preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ's ordinance (see Article 19 of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion), must be seen by each true biblically orthodox Christian as distinct from the geographical area of the parish in the old Christendom paradigm.

As it was in the beginning with the apostolic paradigm so it is once again: the front door of the Congregation is the ultimate mission territory and the priesthood of believers who make up the membership of the body of Christ are called by God to step out of their houses of worship and engage an unbelieving world in Gospel action. It had become clear to Mead that if a local Congregation is not alive, if it is not turning out people who are truly interested in making disciples of Jesus Christ then it is in fact not an actual manifestation of the visible Church of Christ. In returning to the apostolic paradigm, spiritually mature baptized believers are called not just to be “good” citizens of the nation and in a token manner to contribute to a Congregation’s budget so as to prolong the life of a dying institution. Rather, they are called to put their efforts and energies into the body of Christ, that place where the demands of mission are experienced.

Within this return to the apostolic paradigm, the role of the ordained minister has also once again changed. Unlike in the Christendom paradigm, the clergy are no longer seen as high status and low stress professionals who serve as chaplains to a conforming community. Indeed, the ordained life has become, as it was in the apostolic paradigm, one of much lower status and much higher stress. The clergy are still expected by those who cling to the Christendom paradigm to be loyal managers and leaders of denominational and institutional identity. But this task, more often than not, has been proven to be in direct conflict with the clergy’s biblical calling of assisting the laity to take responsibility for mission in the family,

workplace and community. Thus we read the words of Saint Paul to the Ephesians (4:12-13):

And (the Lord) gave [to the church]... pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The result of this conflict within mainline Protestant churches with regard to the expectation of the clergy produced over the latter half of the twentieth-century a loss of authority and role clarity and, in many cases, depression, anger, stress and burn-out amongst the ranks of the ordained.

Personally, sixteen years of experience as an ordained clergyman has taught me that there are four discernable stages that inform us when an institution has hit the wall. The first stage is shock. The second is defensive retreat. The third is acknowledgement. And the fourth is adaptation. In my opinion, though there is still the occasional Congregation within a mainline denomination that is an exception, a majority of congregations that makeup the mainline Protestant churches in America have hit the wall. They cling to the belief that maybe if they did the same old thing (that is, they lived the Christendom paradigm) more efficiently or more effectively or sold it better, they could somehow stop their demographic and economic hemorrhaging. They continue to believe that if they just continue to be non-judgmental, inclusive and comforting everything will turn out all right.

As far as I can tell, some of the leaders within the mainline churches have perhaps moved as far as stage two—defensive retreat; but an overwhelming percentage of them are still in total denial of reality and have not (in my opinion) even begun to yet approach stage one—shock. They are completely tied to their denominational traditions. They love them—and (I believe) they love those human traditions more than they love the Gospel itself. There is tremendous structural resistance within the mainline. I see virtually no signs of acknowledging the depth of the problem for the crisis they are in the middle of even though a seemingly endless number of articles analyzing the “decline” of the theologically bankrupt “mainline churches” continue to flow from the pens of historians and theologians alike.

A New Mission Frontier

Four years ago, realizing there was a clarion call from within our soul for biblical vision, doctrinal clarity and spiritual direction, we here at the Church of The Apostles chose to leave the broken Christendom paradigm behind and made a determined and prayer filled commitment to immerse our Congregation in the apostolic paradigm: an unwavering dedication to the supreme authority of holy Writ; to truly be a people who are “*astonished at Jesus’ teaching*” and who stand firm in the belief that “*his word possesses authority*” (Luke 4:32).

In order to equip ourselves to accomplish this goal we collectively and purposely jettisoned our previous Christendom DNA and turned



the structure of our Congregation upside and (in imitation of the early Church’s apostolic paradigm) organized ourselves as a congregational episcopacy so as to better serve the local mission of the church. Congregational episcopacy is the Church’s most ancient structure—a structure of apostolic continuity filled with mutual accountability that is able to hold steady and not panic in difficult times while simultaneously not allowing needed innovation and change to become erratic and impulsive.

We are well aware here at the Church of The Apostles that our American culture has in the past five decades rapidly changed from a “traditional” culture to a “post-traditional,” “post-modern” and “post-Christian” society. Indeed, we live in a post-Christian environment in which people are constructing culture and society on an individual basis from a myriad of global options. Religion has moved from being an activity of the faith community, rooted in God’s divine revelation of himself, to an individual pursuit. There is little interest in the post-modern world for the coherence of Christ’s exclusive message of salvation. Rather, secular people seek out resources from various venues which they string together to meet the needs of their own personal “religious” and “spiritual” pleasure.

Here at the Church of The Apostles your Elders and Deacons believe that in the future we need to be intentional about Christian education for the laity as they live in an ever

increasing world of social ambiguity and moral relativism. Indeed, most all new Christians have little background in the specifics of the Faith. Their life experiences before conversion have become more diverse and pastoral care must have an overt educational component.

The Superintendent, Elders and Deacons of the Church of The Apostles must energetically support their vocational partnership with all the baptized and provide training that equips them for their vital participation in ministry on the new mission frontier. The effective and creative training of our clergy here at Church of The Apostles so as to better do this equipping is one of our major challenges. Indeed, there is an ongoing need for re-engaging in biblical theology so that it will relate to the missionary frontier, to people's decision making in the family, at work and in the community, rather than being a classroom exercise for the academic elite. We must approach this task with commitment and imagination and encourage innovation and creative thinking while simultaneously offering practical guidance. We must remember that the complementary ministry of the ordained and the baptized are called by Scripture to be weaved together with cords that cannot be broken.

Personally, here at the Church of The Apostles, in the ministerial capacities of my office as Superintendent, I thoroughly enjoy helping to bring together members of the body (both lay and ordained) who think outside of the box and I find it especially invigorating when the priesthood of believers are given by the leadership the necessary latitude to explore the incredible depths of *"the faith that was*

once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Indeed, I always believe that the specific people facing any particular challenge or problem in the Congregation are those best suited to help discover new ways to understand it and solve it.

Obey, follow and bear witness to Jesus Christ

Because the Good News of God in Christ produces people who do not disdain those who disagree with them, a biblically orthodox Congregation that truly preaches the pure Word and God and rightly administers the Gospel Sacraments should be filled with members who effectively address people's hopes and aspirations with Christ and his saving work.

I believe that our Congregation's Elders and Deacons have a vision for the Church of The Apostles that will see conversions to Christ of rich and poor, highly educated and less educated, men and women, old and young, married and single, black, white, asian and latino. We should hope and aspire to draw highly secular and post-modern people, as well as reaching "spiritual" and "religious" people who still live in the Christendom paradigm.

And because of the balance and attractiveness of our biblically and historically rooted ministry of Word and Sacrament and the true humility of the members of our Congregation, the Church of The Apostles shall continue to find in the years to come people in our midst who are exploring and trying to understand the Christian Faith as they search for a meaning to life that far outreaches the empty promises of the world. We must

strive, therefore, to welcome these fellow pilgrims in hundreds of ways. We would accomplish little if we were to merely make them “comfortable” but not make the Gospel message understandable.

As we move forward in the apostolic paradigm may we be loyal to our stated mission: “To obey, follow and bear witness to Jesus Christ.” I believe that such a commitment will constantly drive the Church of The Apostles afresh toward the Word of God, toward the Christ of Scripture, toward the Good News of Jesus, and we will continue to grow in our ability, by God’s grace, to “*act in step with the truth of the gospel*” (Galatians 2:14).



Mission Statement

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

“For the mission of the Church,
that in faithful witness she may preach the
Gospel to the ends of the earth,
we pray to you, O Lord.”

(The Prayers of the People,
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 390)

Mission has become a much more frequently discussed theme in theology and in the wider-church in recent years. Twenty years ago when I was in graduate school and seminary, the only people who even mentioned the subject were the unusual theological conservatives (like me) who seemed to be “obsessed with Jesus” and believed that the world actually needed to be

converted to the Gospel!

But, now as the historic mainline churches in America collapse under the weight of their having abandoned biblical Christianity over the past forty years and replaced it with a complete embracing of humanism and “inclusive” secular philosophy, the whole subject of mission is suddenly hot within thousands of these dying congregations in our nation.

Indeed, it has become painfully obvious that the United States (and the whole Western world for that matter) is now totally post-Christian. And this factor alone accounts for this new interest in “mission” among the disappearing mainline. Their problem, however, is that they want to define “mission” on their terms – and not on God’s term as it has been revealed in Holy Scripture itself.

Dying churches are particularly interested these days in getting their “mission statement” out in the public arena. They are hoping that an enticing and tantalizing mission statement will make hundreds, if not at least dozens, of un-churched, ignorant, non-believers just suddenly start showing up at their doors. The fact is, of course, that in a totally post-Christian, secular culture that worships humanism and not the living God, people do not simply show up at church the way they did forty, thirty, twenty, ten or even five years ago! Convinced pagans (so they claim) have no need for historic Christianity’s “good news.”

Let me share with you a few examples (that are found on the web-sites of four parishes of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island) of

what literally passes as an acceptable contemporary “mission statement” these days:

Parish 1: Our Community is many things. We are a place to worship God. We are a place to find safety and comfort. We are a place to be strengthened. We are a place to learn. We are a place to build friendships. We are a place to be challenged. We are a place to make God’s love known. We welcome all for Christian worship, fellowship, and service, trusting God to transform our lives and the world.

Parish 2: As a religious community, we share the gifts of love with our fellow Christians. This love is non-conditional and accepts diversity in all of its richness, including race, class, gender and sexuality. Our congregation welcomes and encourages all believers to join us on our Christian journey in the Episcopal faith. A community of believers should be diverse and allow members to learn from one another.

Parish 3: Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are cordially invited to be among us for services, to share in communion, to spend quiet time in the sanctuary, to reflect in the Memorial Garden or to join us in fellowship. We are here all year to help everyone abide in God’s love. We offer Spiritual Care, Healing Services, Community Activities, Comfort and Guidance, Assistance for those in need, Baptisms, Weddings and Memorials.

Parish 4: We are a small, friendly church

that welcomes all people and is committed to accepting people from all traditions, cultures, and sexual orientations. The parish has a modern wheel chair ramp for physically challenged people. We are a Rainbow Congregation.

Please note that not one of these four “mission statements” ever mentions the name of Jesus! In fact they purposely avoid it! And while they are certainly “statements” of one kind or another – I do not believe that a single one of them has anything to do with truly Christian “mission” in the theological sense of the word.

Now let us contrast these examples with our own Mission Statement here of the Church of The Apostles as defined in our Bylaws:

The mission of the Church of The Apostles is to obey, follow and bear witness to Jesus Christ. To achieve this mission the Church of The Apostles is committed to worship and prayer, evangelism, Christian education and discipleship, the biblical principles of stewardship, and to providing a moral example and spiritual leadership to the lost.

So who is right – them or us? What truly is Christian “mission”?

Well, since the Bible (at least for the Church of The Apostles) is the most important source for our theological information (that is, God’s perfect revelation of himself and his will to mankind), we need to start there. But (strangely enough) the word is missing from the Scriptures. It seems that “mission” is in its origin a Latin word and thus it is literally

not found in either the Old or New Testament. A trip back to the English dictionary teaches us that mission has to do with “sending” and the idea of sending, and being sent, is pasted all over the Bible.

For instance, God “sent” Moses to Pharaoh to proclaim freedom for Israel (Exodus 3); God promised that one day he will “send” out his Spirit on “*all flesh*” (Joel 2:28); God “sent” his Son to save the world he created and loved (John 3:16-17); Jesus called his disciples to “*become fishers of men*” (Mark 1:17) and “sent” them out to teach, heal and cast out demons (Mark 6:7-13); the Spirit is “sent” at Pentecost to empower the church (Acts 1:8); and as we read in Matthew’s Gospel (28:18-20), the church is “sent” into the world to preach the Gospel and make new disciples:

And Jesus said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Simply on the basis of these biblical texts alone, I must say, it is not enough to claim that “mission” equals “doing the Great Commission.” First of all, the term “great commission” doesn’t occur in the Bible. Most people associate the term with the verses from Matthew’s Gospel (28:18-20), but Jesus actually commissions the disciples for ministry in the world on several occasions, using different language each time. Usually

when people talk about the Great Commission they mean that the church should do evangelistic work (that is, tell people about Jesus and invite them into a saving relationship with him) and plant new churches in places where they do not exist. In this sense we certainly should all be “Great Commission Christians,” and the Church of The Apostles, Coventry, Rhode Island, should be a “Great Commission Congregation.” But if we read the biblical texts referred to in this article, the biblical idea of mission actually seems to be quite a bit bigger than even Matthew 28.

First, “mission” is about God. Notice God sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. Mission is first and foremost about the missionary life of our Triune God. God’s mission is seen in his creating a good world to share life with his creatures (Genesis 1 and 2); in calling Israel to be his people so that through Israel all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3); in his ransom of Israel from slavery in Egypt, delivering them from the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 15); giving them the Torah (the Law of Moses) as guidance for the life of faith (Exodus 20); and sending the prophets to call them to repentance. In this sense, “mission” is God’s work for his world, through his people.

Second, “mission” is holistic. An (Anglican) African bishop has said, “Empty stomachs have no ears.” Indeed, preaching the Gospel cannot be separated from living the Gospel. Making disciples of all nations cannot be divorced from “*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded*” (Matthew 28:19). Evangelism cannot be done without

accompanying love in action. True social justice cannot be done without a word of biblical interpretation – we love, we work for true biblical justice and peace, because of God’s love for us in Christ Jesus. Jesus sent his disciples to preach – but also to heal and cast out demons. Yes, this means prayer and exorcism, but it also means providing health care and clean water; it also means challenging demonic political systems that oppress the poor and weak. As another African bishop has said, “Sometimes the demons take over individuals, sometimes whole communities, and sometimes nations – Christians need to cast them all out!”

Third, “mission” is always centered in the person of Jesus and always points to the cross. Any actions purporting to be “mission” that are just good works but not truly motivated by the “Good News” found in the New Testament are simply not Christian mission. It is perfectly possible to work for justice, but ignore the justifying work of Christ on the cross. It is possible to speak in favor of peace and security, but ignore the reality that Jesus “*is our peace*” (Ephesians 2:14) and that only in God do we Christians find true security: “*Not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit, says the LORD*” (Zechariah 4:6). “*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God*” (Psalm 20:7). In the end, “mission” is not about what we do, but about what God has done for us in Christ.

Finally, “mission” starts with God and is centered in Christ and the cross. The results of mission are ultimately in God’s hands. He is the one who sends, empowers and

equips his people for mission, and he is the one who will bring the mission to completion in the New Creation, where “*he will wipe away every tear from (our) eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*” (Revelation 21:4).

“*Now Jesus came proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe the good news.’ And as he passed along the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him*” (Mark 1:14-17).



Old and Young Together

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

As Christians it is appropriate that we pray before every important undertaking. Belief in the power of the risen and ascended Christ and his command to love thy neighbor as thyself are the foundational tenets of our Faith. At the Church of The Apostles, every member of the body of Christ should be respected and held as precious by his or her fellow Christians. Indeed, we all share a common conviction: cultivation of our life in Christ is the bedrock upon which moral character is established.

The Christian Faith is life-giving. Over the

past four years, serving in my office as *episkopos* (“superintendent” or “bishop”) of our Congregation, I have learned and relearned much about our common faith in the living God. And I have done this, not by reading expensive books, sophisticated theological journals, or the advice column of a self-proclaimed “spiritual” guru, but from the wisdom shared with me by several of our senior sisters and brothers in the body of Christ here at the Church of The Apostles. In reflection upon this fact I often find myself remembering the words of the Psalmist: *“Young men and maidens, old and young together. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name only is exalted, his splendor is over earth and heaven”* (Psalm 148:12-13).

Of the many senior citizens that I have had the privilege of sharing time with these past four years, the vast majority of them told me that faith is the key in their ability to cope gracefully with the challenges of aging and the pain of life’s inevitable losses. Those of us privileged to “sit at the feet” of our elders discover that listening to these senior servants of God greatly adds to our own, often, less seasoned faith. More often than not, we receive far more from our spiritual elders than we can ever give in return. These sisters and brothers have known hard times; their faith has seen them through and allowed them to meet life’s battles with dignity. Their example guides those of us who have not yet attained the hindsight of their multiple decades of faith in Christ.

I believe that it is important for our Congregation to be led by ordained and consecrated men and women whose vision incorporates the varied gifts that all the

members of Christ’s body have to offer. For the Bishop (Superintendent), Presbyters (Elders), or Deacons (Diaconal Ministers) of our Congregation, it is most vital that we desire to deliver supportive pastoral care with an ear open to the life-time of experience that our beloved senior brothers and sisters have to tell. Personally, I have found it invaluable to listen to the wisdom our seniors, those *“whose hearts are set on the pilgrims’ way”* (Psalm 84:4), gladly share with me. By doing this, I believe, I have learned to tap the power of prayer with those who know best its comfort.

At times over these past four years I have met with several older folks who were struggling over the apparent purposelessness of a specific suffering that has come upon them. At such time I hope, by God’s grace, that I have been able to offer myself as a fellow pilgrim willing to explore the painful depths of sorrow with those who toil with doubt; and yet point the way to our Lord Jesus, whose light is always the pathway unto our feet, especially when we are passing through life’s darkest valley.

By working as partners with our Congregation’s Elders and Diaconal Ministers, members of our exceptional Church Staff, and all of you, the baptized, the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9), who make up our Lord’s body here at the Church of The Apostles, we must all collectively do our best to attend to the holy quests of our sisters and brothers acquainted by long experience with the heavenly music of the soul.

Almost twenty years ago now, when I was a seminary student-chaplain serving at a hospital in Wallingford, Connecticut, one ninety-nine year woman told me of the

“loneliness” she sometimes felt since the passing on of all her family and long-time friends. “But, then again, I don’t really feel that they are so far away,” she added. “I often feel they surround me, right where I am in bed.” This faithful servant of God was almost totally blind, but I never heard her complain. Her life-giving faith, prized by the young, frightened, inexperienced, and tongue-tied seminarian who sat by her bedside, gave vitality, purpose, and infinite dignity to her days.

Through the love of Christ shared with me by those I have been sent to as a pastor to comfort, I have often been taught how to love like Christ. By the living of those who, even in darkness, see and believe in the sanctity of life for Christ’s sake, I have been taught how

to live in Christ. By the generosity of those who in the eyes of an unbelieving world would appear to have lost all that should bring joy, I have been taught the joy of giving in faith. I thank God for all the healing that his senior servants’ faith in the power of the risen and ascended Christ has brought into my life. These blessed of our Lord have taught me the real significance of what God has called all baptized members of his Church to be – servants of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Young men and maidens, old and young together, let us pray continually one for another, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, as we praise the exalted name of the LORD, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

Prayers for the Aged and those Who Live Alone

Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, whose Son had nowhere to lay his head: Grant that those who live alone may not be lonely in their solitude, but that, following in his steps, they may find fulfillment in loving you and their neighbors; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 829-830)

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

By Elder Chad Tvenstrup

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
(John 4:24)

Jesus stood before the Samaritan woman at the well and attempted to explain to a confused soul that worship was not about *where* someone was worshipping from (see John 4:16-24). Instead, he pointed to her a most significant truth: *“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him”* (John 4:23). Jesus was, in fact, confirming here the utmost significance of prayer and worship.

And in the ancient tradition of the early Church, followers of the Way (Acts 9:2) took their individual and collective prayer and worship time seriously (see, for instance, Acts 2:42). They were, no doubt, concerned with Jesus’ own words as recorded by John (above). Additionally, it is no wonder that they were concerned with prayer, as Jesus directed his own Apostles, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel: *“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us*

not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (6:7-13).

In our own Anglican tradition, we have inherited this same understanding of importance concerning prayer and liturgy. In many ways, at least for the earlier Anglicans, they were unified by their Common Prayer. In other words, for many years, what Anglicans prayed is, in fact, what they believed (*lex orandi, lex credendi*). As time passed and the Anglican Communion of churches worldwide became less homogenous, and theological liberalism crept in slowly but steadily, the idea of “common prayer” began to wane. But this historical pattern does not change the truth of the early Church Fathers. In fact, what we pray as Christians *should* be what we believe. Certainly, if it is not, then it does not meet the biblical mandate found in John (i.e. how can our worship be “in truth” if we are expressing things that we do not agree with?). Personally though, I cannot think of anything that would be more of a waste of time than to spend my mornings and evenings in the Daily Office of Morning and Evening Prayer, or in daily devotions from *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), or in weekly Eucharistic Celebrations at the Church of The Apostles if all of those collects, Psalms, Scripture lessons, suffrages, canticles, and Creeds, really did not flow from a sincere belief in them. Why, I ask you, would I not spend my time doing something else?

So what is it, then, about the prayers and liturgy of the venerable Anglican Common Prayer tradition that are so believable (particularly as they were originally envisioned by Thomas Cranmer, the 16th

century reforming Archbishop of Canterbury and primary author of the 39 *Articles of Religion* and *The Book of Common Prayer*? Why is it that what I read in the liturgy that is set forth from the orthodox Anglican tradition is something that I can wholeheartedly endorse? After all, I can sit for hours with my prayer journal and come up with all sorts of extemporaneous and Spirit-filled prayers: prayers of adoration and thanksgiving, prayers of confession and penitence, prayers of petition and intercession. Certainly (I hope) these personal prayers would be steeped in Scripture (both from memorized portions and the fact that I have access to over a dozen different Bibles!). So why is it that I yearn for common (form) prayer? Why don't we here at the Church of The Apostles worship like most other evangelical Protestants who simply "open the prayer floor" to let the Spirit work its magic? The reasons are probably more complicated than I will present to you in this (short) article. However, I thought that a general overview of the advantages of collective and unified prayer (Common Prayer) would be helpful to all those who worship with us at Church of The Apostles on a regular basis, as well as to those who we will reach for Christ in the coming days.

The Reverend Doctor James I. Packer, a professor at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and perhaps the most learned and authoritative evangelical voice in Anglicanism today, has written a celebration of the Prayer Book tradition that I found is very helpful in answering this very question: "Rooted and Built Up In Christ (Colossians

2:6-7): The Prayer Book Path". In his wisdom prompted by the Holy Spirit, I am sure, Dr. Packer notes that Cranmer's original vision for Common Prayer contains five distinct and significant practices (especially as they relate to the state of the medieval Church on the eve of the Reformation). For instance, medieval worship was very concentrated on the clergy. In fact, in most cases, the clergy would say the Mass (in Latin, facing away from the people) in the sanctuary at the back of the chancel that was divided from the nave by a rood screen. In other words, the laity would stand far away from the Priest, not understanding the language or responding at all. In fact, the tradition of "Sanctus" bells in Church arose to signal the people that Consecration (the climax of the medieval Eucharistic rite) was about to take place, hence, waking the Congregants up to the reason that they were there in the first place! Because of this disconnect, along with reinforcement of errant medieval Eucharistic theology, most of all Cranmer wanted to make liturgy Congregational. He formulated a litany in 1544 and Common Prayer liturgies in 1549 and again in 1552 that included the laity in a service that was written in the vernacular (common language). The Congregation would respond to prayers and would recite psalms antiphonally (responsively). I agree with Thomas Cranmer and Dr. Packer; worship certainly should involve all the people, not as members of an uninvolved audience, but as active participants. This view of worship is certainly supported by all biblical references and understanding. As such, our Common Prayer tradition reinforces this very same

idea.

A second strength that Dr. Packer emphasizes concerning Common Prayer is that it is simple. From the ornate and complex liturgical language and action of the medieval Church, Cranmer believed that liturgy, in being accessible to people, should also be as simple as possible. And this liturgical simplicity reinforces and leads to a third strength of our Anglican form prayer: a service that is edifying for the people. Cranmer brought the regular exposition of the Scriptures back into the worship of the Church. His formatted lectionary was designed to expose regular worship participants (in Morning and Evening Prayer, and in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist) to the entire Old Testament (once) and New Testament (twice) throughout the course of one calendar year. Wow! That is a lot of the Word! And he also began the process of formulating a biblically based and doctrinally reformed Book of Homilies that would be read in service. These teachings, in addition to other sermons preached by willing and able Presbyters would guarantee that Christian basics would be presented regularly to all Congregants. In Cranmer's mind, this continual teaching and exposition was so important in order to resurrect a learned and wise (biblically informed) clergy as well as laity.

A most significant aspect of Common Prayer as is found in our tradition (considering especially that "what we pray is what we believe") is the fact that it is Gospel centered. In all the prayer and worship that we engage in, it must be "*in spirit and truth*". Hence, it must have the absolute end of glorifying God

not only for who he is, but also for what he has done in sending Jesus. So worship service is not simply a set of unconnected bits and pieces. Rather, it is an integrated unit. It has a "shape" and a "route" (as Packer himself writes). So in all of Cranmer's services in the Common Prayer tradition we find a pattern in order to communicate this reality. In fact, we find a sequence of three distinct themes: 1) man's sin detected and confessed, 2) God's mercy and grace proclaimed and celebrated, and 3) Faith, focused and expressed. In Packer's own words we first face our "need for Christ, second acknowledging God's merciful provision of Christ; third, expressing our trustful, thankful response to Christ." I have neither the space nor time in this venue to evidence this fact from the actual liturgies themselves. However, I encourage you to investigate Morning and Evening Prayer attempting to find this pattern. Likewise, study the Eucharistic liturgy in proclamation of the Word and in the celebration of the Great Thanksgiving. These patterns are certainly not hidden!

Finally, Common Prayer in our tradition focuses on unifying the participants. In worshipping in the Anglican tradition utilizing formatted liturgy, we are not only fostering unity among ourselves (as Congregants), but also unity with other Christians, the Church Universal. Furthermore, in a current Anglican Communion that is not unified in any one theological confession (though we here at the Church of The Apostles would certainly endorse the *39 Articles of Religion* as the viable option), it is even more important that prayers unify and bring us together in Christ.

Apart from a confession of faith of any kind, instead prayers will divide because at least some of them are apt to reflect theologically ignorant (at best) or apostate (at worst) principles.

So what does it all mean to us? Why should we be concerned with liturgy? Why is it so important that what we pray is, in fact, what we believe (*lex orandi, lex credendi*)? I guess the question for us (in part) is what does liturgy do for us? Cranmer's answer (and I would agree with his answer) would be: Liturgy is entering into a time of private prayer and corporate worship in order to glorify the living God who saved us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, regular (even daily) rule is helpful in molding and shaping us into the stature of Christ. Liturgy is necessary

exposure to the Word of God, as well as opportunity for sound teaching and exposition. Liturgy is a bold witness to faith in Christ, and to living out that witness and commitment through service and testimony. Likewise, liturgy is the formal opportunity for our offering Tithes in order to support the mission of the Church. Liturgy is meeting the Lord (God's grace being spiritually imparted) in the partaking of his body and blood. Liturgy is, in fact, all of these things, and we are wise to take them seriously. And though I am sure that Jesus did not specifically mean all that I have presented here in speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:16-24), I also do not believe that he would disagree.

The Song of the Redeemed *Magna et mirabilia*

Revelation 15:3-4

O ruler of the universe, Lord God,
great deeds are they that you have done, *
surpassing human understanding.
Your ways are ways of righteousness and truth, *
O King of all the ages.

Who can fail to do you homage, Lord,
and sing the praises of your Name? *
for you only are the Holy One.
All nations will draw near and fall down before you, *
because your just and holy works have been revealed.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer, p. 94)

Presumptuous Sins

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

“O LORD,
above all,
keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion over me;
then shall I be whole and sound,
and innocent of a great offense.”

(Psalm 19:13)

If we had only what biblical scholars call the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), which were put into written form some 40 years after Our Lord’s ascension, we could easily conclude that Jesus of Nazareth spent almost all of his public and healing ministry and did all his preaching (other than the final week of his life spent in Jerusalem) in that northern region of ancient Palestine that he knew as home and which was known simply as “the Galilee.”

Fortunately, the Gospel According to John, which was probably penned some twenty or more years after the Synoptic Gospels, informs us that during his public ministry Jesus made at least a few (and perhaps several) visits to Jerusalem, the capital city of that southern region of ancient Palestine known as Judah.

Indeed, throughout the narrative of John’s Gospel, Jesus gives the “*leaders of the people*” in Jerusalem (Luke 19:47) plenty of opportunities to hear his message and his personal claims. Jesus also works several astounding miracles in or near the city. For instance, in chapter five of John’s Gospel, on the Sabbath day, merely by the power of his

command, Jesus heals a man who had been lame for thirty-eight years. In chapter nine, he gives sight to a man who had been blind from birth by applying mud to the man’s eyes that he makes with his own spittle; and in chapter eleven, again with just his spoken word, Jesus raises his friend Lazarus, who had been in the tomb for four days, from the dead. In the fourth Gospel, John makes it very clear that the “*leaders of the people*” (that is, the priests and the Pharisees) in Jerusalem were given every opportunity to learn who Jesus really was, and every help to believe in him, but they would not. And John makes it just as clear that the fault was theirs. And, therefore, the loss was theirs as well.

It is in chapter two of John’s Gospel, however, that we read of Jesus’ most radical actions in Jerusalem. According to John (2:13-22), after having just performed his first miracle (2:1-11) at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (his miraculous changing of water into wine), Jesus, with the feast of Passover drawing “*near*”, decides to pay a visit “*to Jerusalem*” (2:13) – and thus (according to John), embarks on the very first journey of his public ministry.

By his having made a whip of cords to drive out the sheep and the cattle of the money changers, who had set up shop in the temple precincts; and by pouring out their cash boxes and overturning their business tables, Jesus is making a major statement. Indeed, his behavior is not an outburst of anger, but rather the energy of righteousness against religious leaders to whom religion had become a business. The cattle, sheep and doves were sold to those men sincerely coming into the temple to make sacrifice.

Roman money (the common currency) was changed into Jewish currency so that a temple tax (a half-shekel) could be paid (as required by Jewish religious law) by every male Jew more than nineteen years of age to the “leaders of the people” (that is, the priests and the Pharisees) who controlled this entire game of selling religion for profit. You see, these so-called “leaders of the people” had fallen into the trap (of which the Psalmist speaks) of letting “presumptuous sins...get dominion over (them)” (Psalm 19:13).

By his demanding that the religious establishment “Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” (2:16), Jesus is staking his ultimate claim – that, of all people who dwell on earth, he alone (not the “leaders of the people”) is Lord over the Jerusalem temple.

Thus, on this his first visit during his public ministry to the most sacred of Jewish ground, Jesus made it perfectly clear to the priests and Pharisees that he was someone extraordinary, someone who by divinely inherited right is in an absolutely unique and intimate personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom he has the audacity to call “Father,” and whose house (he claimed) these “leaders of the people” were desecrating.

“What sign can you show us for doing this?” the priests and Pharisees demand. Jesus answers, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” They sarcastically respond, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three

days?” (2:18-20).

At the end of his three year struggle with the religious establishment, Jesus did (of course) on the third day raise in glory “the temple of his body” (2:21). As we read in Matthew’s Gospel, some of the religious leaders seem to have recalled this saying of Jesus memorialized in the second chapter of John’s Gospel on the afternoon after they had put Christ to death. Indeed, they asked Pontius Pilate to place a guard on his tomb for three days lest his disciples should remove the body and pretend he had risen. “We remember,” they informed Pilate, “what that imposter said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again’” (Matthew 27:63).



And at the last, even the miracle of Christ’s resurrection affected only but a very small minority of these “leaders of the people.” Why? Because “presumptuous sins” truly had dominion over the vast majority of them and they had already negatively made up their minds about the

claims made by this Jesus of Nazareth. As the old adage goes “there are none as blind as those who choose not to see.”

The reasons for their blindness (of course) were the same as those that keep the millions of neo-pagans of our day who have heard the Word of God proclaimed from accepting and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The modern secular-humanist, like the priests and Pharisees of the temple in Jerusalem long ago, are so immersed in the affairs of this world that they can give no thought to their own eternal future. They are in blind pursuit of

the so-called “good life” – seeking pleasure (both sensually and emotionally), wealth, status, leisure and ease; and the whole time falsely believing that such pursuits can be achieved without extracting a great cost. Their eyes are so fixed on their earthly and temporal objectives that they have set for themselves – that they cannot even see the moral or spiritual value of anything else.

The priests and Pharisees, the “good life” pursuers in Jesus’ day, wanted far more than just political freedom from the tyranny of Roman oppression. They had set their hopes on a Messiah figure who would give them (the religious leaders) control of a great regional or even world empire, and with it wealth and power without limit. The neo-pagans of our day may or may not go so far, but, none-the-less, their worldly aims are so important in their eyes that the “*presumptuous sins*” that motivate them make them exclude from their minds the thought of any truly lofty and noble goals.

Yet, the modern neo-pagans have more than enough reminders whichever way they turn to recall their minds to the historical facts of the Christian ethic: the very facts upon which Western civilization, democratic rule, human rights and freedom, and all constitutional law itself is ultimately based. We all live in time and space. The fact is, as we each take our breaths at this very moment, it is *Anno Domini Nostri Jesu Christi 2010* (“The Year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 2010”); that is, it has been 2010 years since the birth of the one and only true Messiah.

Who was he? Why was he born? Why does the whole world divide its history before he

came, B.C. (“Before Christ”), and after he came *A.D. (Anno Domine)*? In every city, town and village of our once Christian Western world there is at least a church or two with steeples pointing to the sky. Why? What do these churches mean anymore to the average person? Why do they exist? In every town there are cemeteries or “sleeping places” as the word means in the Greek. Are those buried there only sleeping and waiting to be called (if not already called) or are they finished forever, gone and forgotten, just like the dog or unthinking cow that may be buried in the backyard next door?

The intellectual elite and arrogant agnostics and atheistic free-thinkers of our time (all those who have let “*presumptuous sins...get dominion over (them)*” and who, by the way, in our culture add thousands to their ranks each day) would be wise to start to think about the real facts of life. The central fact being that Christ, who was the Son of God, took our human nature and lived for some time on this earth (the latter being a point that is historically irrefutable), so that when his mission was complete he could ascend to the right hand of the Father – bringing with him the fullness of humanity – so that where he is, all those who would come to believe in his Name one day may be.

Jesus of Nazareth truly suffered crucifixion at the hands of Roman authorities and he died because the world was full of un-atoned for “*presumptuous sins*” when he came. “*This saying is true,*” Saint Paul insists, “*and worthy of all to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy 1:15). Christ’s death on the cross made atonement to our Father who is in heaven. “*If anyone*

sins,” John wrote, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for our only, but for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 1:1-2).

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the Father’s right hand was the prelude and the guarantee that all of us who are in Christ shall one day rise to a life of glory in heaven, if we continue to boldly share his Good News with an unbelieving world; and daily pick up our crosses and follow him in our journey by faith through grace during our short stays here on this earth.



Who Are We Listening To?

By Elder Nina Deuel

For quite some time God has been speaking to me about listening. Am I truly listening to him and then do I really hear him? What does it mean to listen to God, and how do I go about listening?

A number of years ago I read a book by Jaques Ellul (a French sociologist and Christian) who said our struggle is to come to hear and know God, and not our *idea* of God. Beside reading God’s Word in the Bible, this may be one of the most profound things I have ever read. I realized that when we first come to believe in God and to read his Word and walk with him we often are hearing our idea of God (due to the nature of sin). You see, if it is our idea of God it is an

idol, not God. Listen to the story of the Israelites in the desert after Moses has brought them out of slavery and Egypt. Right in the beginning there are problems. In Exodus 32 we have a perfect example of this struggle of how and whom we are listening to. “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, ‘Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’” (Exodus 32:1). Aaron and the people then proceed to take their gold and make an idol in the form of a calf and worship the idol calling it lord. If we think about all of this we realize that we all do this in one way or another. If God is silent or not doing what we think he should then we take matters into our own hands. The Bible is full of stories like the above, but also full of stories like Joseph (Genesis 39-46) who trusted God and stayed faithful in the most difficult of situations.

I have just begun the study series “The Truth Project.” What struck me about the first tour (as Dr. Del Tackett calls each lecture) is his comparison with truth and lies. He puts the whole subject of Truth in one of the best frameworks I have ever heard. Since God is truth then anything that isn’t of God is a lie. It is that simple. So I got to thinking about the story of the Garden of Eden. In the beginning Adam and Eve had only God to listen to so they only heard truth. But there were other voices in the Garden (this is a mystery and the Bible gives us no explanation why this is) so we have the forbidden tree – the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil. I have heard wonderful teachings about the serpent and the temptation, but it was not until Dr. Tackett talked about truth and lies that I suddenly understood a little of what was going on here. What does the serpent say to Eve? *“Did God actually say ...”* (Genesis 3:1b). The Lie, and here we have the problem. The deep fundamental problem all of us face. Eve listened to the lie and Adam followed (without any protest by the way). Then Eve says to God, “the serpent deceived me.” And so lies and deception entered the world leading to death, and leading to the awful evil we see in our world which for us is highlighted so clearly in the death of Jesus.

After listening to Dr. Tackett I realized that this is our lifelong struggle as Christians. Who are we listening to and what are we hearing? Back in the desert with the Israelites God says this which has been one of the most important sayings of God for the Jews for thousands of years and is memorized by every believing Jew in the world: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not*

build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 6:4-15). If I think of this in terms of truth and lies then hearing God is hearing the truth and worshipping idols is hearing lies.

However, the Bible asks much more of us than hearing with our ears. I was extremely surprised to find out that the Hebrew for hear (*shama*) has as one of its meanings “to obey.” If we read the Bible carefully where there is hearing or listening used, it also implies obeying. According to one of my Hebrew wordbooks *shama* (hear) is used over 1000 times in the Old Testament. God is calling us to hear him and obey him. But this is not an issue of power, but of us having life as God had originally intended.

And what about Jesus? He uses the word hear and listen over and over as he speaks to us. Go read the Gospels and see how important hearing is in what Jesus is saying. God is trying to get our attention. He is calling to us all the time. Do you hear me? Are you listening to me?

Again, I never put it all together until Dr. Tackett then asked the question, “Why did

Jesus come?”. I’ll preempt him if you haven’t participated in “The Truth Project” yet, but I think it is very important that we all understand this. In John 18:37b Jesus says, *“For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”* Now I have read this many times and really not heard it. What I always heard was Pilate’s question *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38) that immediately follows Jesus’ statement.

So what does it all mean? Why is all this so important to us as Christians? Well, we are called to be the body of Christ. It seems to me that one of our purposes on earth is to bear witness to the truth, and to be of the truth. However, we are sinful people and prone to worship and listen to idols, and our ideal of God figures in here prominently. To me the choices have become very clear. Am I listening to the truth (to God and his Word) or am I listening to lies (idols)? Do I change what I hear into my idea of what God should be or do? Am I letting God’s Word transform me and live in me by being obedient to him or am I living the life of the world? In fact, who am I listening to?

Saint Paul’s prayer in his Letter to the Ephesians now has much more meaning for me when he prays that God *“give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe”* (Ephesians 1:17b-19a).

It is my prayer for all of us at the Church of the Apostles that we are diligently seeking to hear God and to be his witnesses on this earth. May he grant us wisdom and knowledge as we discern what voices we are listening to and following. And let us always remember that the Holy Spirit will guide us to all truth as we seek God and obey Him.

The truth will set us free. Praise God for His immeasurable grace and mercy towards us.



All Things To All People

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

In the ninth chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians (9:16-23) Saint Paul encourages his Corinthian converts to be always ready to forgo their own rights when the edification or spiritual welfare of one’s neighbor is at stake. To emphasize this teaching, Paul tells them how he has personally given up rights and privileges, which he certainly could claim, in order to give himself fully and entirely to the spreading of the Gospel among them, and to be seen to be free from any personal interest or gain.

Several decades ago now, a certain Protestant denomination was publishing its first new hymnal in many years. As part of the advance publicity, the hymnal was featured in the denomination’s quarterly magazine, along with a color photo of the book. The photographer or editor was clearly someone with a sense of humor, as evidenced by the

name of the owner of the hymnal that had been written on the cover of the book: *Hilda Dyon*. The cover of this “personally engraved” hymnal was certainly an apt pun, for certain worshipers in every Congregation (regardless of denominational or theological heritage) have such strong feelings about church music – that it is, metaphorically, a “hill [they are willing] to die on”, thus the name – Hilda Dyon.

Indeed, several members of a given Congregation will often (at all cost) do battle for a style of music in worship that is to their liking. Believe it or not, even so-called “devout Christians” can and will argue bitterly about the type of music used in worship! They label their opponents’ preferences as either being too boring or too fast, too stuck in the past or too contemporary, too lacking in substance and any sense of reverence or not free enough in the spirit, too unappealing to Generation X or too disliked by the Greatest Generation, too simplistic or too complicated, too loud or too soft, too much organ or too much guitar and drums, *etc., etc., etc.*

Every “hill to die on” that one might claim as one’s own raises a profound question suggested by the Apostle’s exhortation to the Corinthians. If Paul was willing to “*become all things to all people, that (he) might by all means save some*” (1 Corinthians 9:22), what things should we be willing to become to “save some”? What needs to change in and about our lives, and what should emphatically not change?

It does seem to me that we Christians in America put the cart before the horse when our primary attention is on the “hills” of life

rather than on the reason why we are willing to “die on” them. Or to put it another way, we lose sight of what is most important when we give our energy to negotiating what ground may be yielded instead of on the faith that guides the negotiating.

The driving force behind Saint Paul’s exhortation to the Church in Corinth was his passion for the Gospel. As he says, “*What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make a full use of my rights in the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:18). For Paul, making Christ known as Savior and Lord was more important than how he dressed, what he ate, local customs, personal preferences, or even assuming his rights as an Apostle. He could and would speak the dialect of his listeners. For instance, he used the indigenous imagery of “an unknown god” so that he could present the Gospel in Athens (Acts 17:22-33) and he appealed to the faith of Abraham in order to fully explain the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ to the Judaizers in Galatia (Galatians 3:6-18).

Though a free-man and a Roman citizen, Paul made himself a slave amongst those whom he brought the Gospel, getting no wages, nor material reward for his work of evangelizing them. This he did so that nobody, friend or foe, could charge him with working for his own benefit. He acted thus in order to win all the more to Christ. Paul tried (and succeeded admirably) to put himself on equal footing with all those with whom he came into contact. With the simple he was simple, with the learned he showed his massive learning, with the weak he spoke of his own weaknesses, with those who boasted of

heavenly gifts he spoke of the great fruits of the Spirit he had himself had manifested; hence, the success, under God's grace, of his missionary activity.

You see – it was not “market analysis” that Paul used to accommodate local beliefs and customs, for the only Faith Paul proclaimed was in Christ crucified and risen – a Gospel that he realized (if heard) would win some but not all people to Christ! Indeed, so zealous was Paul for bringing sinners into a reconciling relationship with God through faith in Christ that he was a true servant for the cause – that is, he so loved Christ and the Gospel that he was literally willing to be self-giving to the point of death. This is a far cry from the self-preservation or perpetuation that motivates far too many Congregations to “become all things to all people.”

In her biography, *The Nun's Story*, Kathryn Hulme described the wealth and variety of personalities manifested in her convent experience, in spite of the relative anonymity created by wearing the habit. She mentioned a sister whom the other nun's referred to as a “Living Rule.” It was believed that if the written rule of the order was ever lost or destroyed, it could be reconstituted by studying the “Living Rule.” Her life so embodied the rules and beliefs of the order that other nuns could learn what they needed to know by simply observing her. So it should be with all of us Christians who live outside the cloister! We are not identical to one another, nor are we called to be. But faithful witness means the world should be able to see the same Christ, our “Living Rule,” in our words and deeds.

If we wish to be ambassadors for Christ, as

the Apostle Paul was, and faithful witnesses in a contentious and narcissistic society, our decision making will be informed by a set of values our listeners probably won't perceive – and even if they do, they may not understand. When faced with controversial questions of the day, such as whether to eat food sacrificed to idols or whether to conform to certain Mosaic laws, Paul's bottom line was this: Does this proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and glorify his name? Is it confirmed by God's Word? Will it strengthen the Christian Faith? Will it build up the body of Christ? If a Christian can answer affirmatively to these questions, then that person too may become “*all things to all people*” – all things, that is, that truly point people to the living God. And that would be a worthy “hill to die on.”

When a person is described as a “chameleon” it is generally not meant as a compliment. It suggests that the person is duplicitous – willing to change appearance or viewpoints in order to blend into his or her surroundings. And yet, while a chameleon does change colors, it is never anything but a chameleon. It breathes and eats and acts true to its nature. As Christians we can learn something from chameleons. We can show that we take our surroundings seriously, and harmonize with the cultural context. But at the same time, our nature as children of God through Jesus Christ must remain the same. Our identity, rather than our surroundings, should determine the way we speak and the way we live.

For “*I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings*” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

Looking Forward to New Life

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

Some fifteen years ago now, while in a supermarket in Westerly, Rhode Island (the town in which I first served in the ordained ministry as the Assistant to the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church), I ran into a young man and woman at whose wedding (upon the request of my Rector) I had served as officiant the previous year.

Upon seeing the couple, I immediately noticed that the woman was well into pregnancy, seven to eight months along. After a few minutes of “light talk” our conversation began to address the impending birth of their first child. I asked if the pregnancy had been a hard one, knowing that the woman was continuing to work at a very demanding job. “Yes,” I was told, there had been some very difficult times (especially with her first bouts of morning sickness), but, nevertheless, I could tell that both the mother-to-be and the father-to-be were filled with great joy at the prospect of their baby’s birth.

Several aspects of our limited (approximately twenty minutes), and yet quite rounded, conversation have continued to remain in my thoughts ever since that day.

First, both parents-to-be discussed with me, in some detail, the changes they had made in their collective lives in order to benefit their child. For instance, alcohol was no longer to be found in their home, the consumption of “junk food” had been kept to a minimum, and visitors were no longer allowed to smoke

in their house. I found it interesting that they never referred to this new life growing in the woman’s womb as “the fetus.” In fact, that clinical term would not have even come close to describing their affection for and the significance of the person they naturally called “our baby.” How instinctively they recognized the full precious humanity of the child that was being “*wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14) by God Almighty himself in “Mommy’s” womb. And how greatly they had altered their previously “care free” lifestyle to nourish and protect that vulnerable life.

Secondly, I was impressed by how much this new life had changed the couple’s whole understanding and outlook on life. Both were well-educated, both were “successful” professionals, (and as recall) both had generally supported quite liberal views on the issues of the day, and in previous conversations with them I had frequently heard the two speak about significantly progressive political, economic, and social concerns. I was struck by how much more specific our supermarket conversation was, how much less theoretical it was than those in times passed. I was surprised, as well, by how much the impending birth of their baby had changed the tone of their previously abstract and usually “politically correct” ideals. Moral issues now mattered to them at a much more profound level. Indeed, they were now beginning to realize the monumental responsibilities that come to the parents who choose to bring a child into this world.

Finally, I saw how their great love for this

soon-to-be-born child had deepened their love for each other, and deepened their love, as well, for their own parents and friends, for all of mankind, indeed, for God himself. Even before her birth, this gift from the Almighty was teaching her parents to view their fellow man and all of God's creation in a whole new light.

As I reflect back on my conversation with that joyfully expectant couple of many years ago, my spirit moves me in the present to hope and pray that God's people would gladly remember that all life from the womb to the grave is a precious gift, ours to protect and cherish. No human life is insignificant or a mere statistic. I pray that the Holy Spirit may bring about in all of us a renewed perspective, a new outpouring of love for one another – especially the most vulnerable in our midst.



What do you THINK of God?

The Role of the Intellect in Christian Life

By Elder Rob Geoffrey

The last time we saw each other, it was probably in church last Sunday - unless we worked together on a ministry project during the week. Nonetheless, we had lively Christian fellowship, and don't we all seem to act a certain way at church? It's our holy time, it's when we come together as friends, no, more as a family, to worship our God, gather around his table and love one another.

At the celebration on the Feast of Pentecost we experienced acute oneness in Christ. Our hearts were focused on the great work God is doing in the lives of a family that had become one with us and one with our Lord. Our hearts were also focused on the great work God is doing in the lives of our brothers and sisters whose strength in the Spirit had brought them to the table rail out of sheer desire to demonstrate their commitment to Christ. I heard people say that the church was "full of the spirit". Indeed, the *Church* is full of the *Spirit*.

Writing to you who were in attendance, did you feel energized, or spiritual, or thankful, or encouraged? I did. Though we're not likely to admit it, many of us would not regularly attend worship services if we were not left with some kind of good feeling. We have a natural affinity to good feelings; we are wired that way. We know it; we embrace it; and the cultural sirens, including many churches, attempt to exploit it. Too often, the wider church experience becomes a mirror of pagan culture with emphasis on the individual's feelings and one's emotional reaction to another's charm. It seems that people just want to be led into a detached state, a sort of suspension of reality. When our good feelings jive with our faith experience, life is good. Conversely, if we did not "feel the spirit" God was not fully with us and something was amiss. This is dangerous because our feelings are not necessarily a good indicator of the presence of the Holy One. In fact, God doesn't need our permission or even our invitation to be among us.

Emotions and feelings are truly gifts from God that no other creature on earth can possess. Through them we are able to appreciate the glory of the Almighty on so many levels. This is no small thing. But the subjective part of our psyche *can* be misleading. Like all areas of life, the pure manifestation of feelings and emotions has been tainted by sin; they can be a powerful tool of the Master of Lies. *“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...”* (Romans 1:25). “Don’t confuse me with facts,” they said, and to this day the heart of man turns from his Creator. They knew the Truth but they used their free will to allow the lie to bypass the mind and enter the heart. My mother used to admonish me – “For crying out loud, Robert! Why don’t you use the brains God gave you?” If only I did! But I couldn’t without a converted heart *and* knowledge of the Truth.

Humanity is created with an innate awareness of God and rejection or suppression of this wonder is contrary to his will for us. *“... that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:19-20). When the Father calls us, this smoldering ember of the knowledge of him bursts into flame. Some come to faith by the encouragement of others, some do not.

Either way, the spark that ignites the smoldering ember must come from the Spirit and he must enter our being through a gate. His objective is a changed heart, for the receptive heart will be converted into a new creature. His destination is the heart, but faith must enter through the gate of the mind. First the mind understands, and then the heart accepts. Eventually, our will causes us to repent and turn from our sins. Repentance and faith are inextricably linked; one cannot exist without the other.

Can we see how vital the intellectual facet is to our faith journey? Yes, feelings and emotions play an important role in our acceptance of the Gospel call and they also serve to motivate us to love the Lord, but without at least a basic understanding of the Gospel message we will not be able to answer the call in the first place. *“And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”* (Romans 10:14b); how can we love God with no knowledge of him?

We were once conformed to the world, shackled by our fallen nature, then by varying degrees of cooperation from our free will, the Spirit of Truth changes our hearts into something other, something not dead, but alive for God. So faith comes by feeling, and feeling by what we say is good? NO! *“... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17). When the mind is convinced, the heart will follow.

It may seem obvious, but no one has come to



faith in Jesus Christ without some kind of awareness of the Gospel message: a) we are all sinners, b) we are spiritually dead in our sins, c) Jesus died in our place so we may be reconciled to the Father. So why is it that there is so much emphasis on “the experience”? If we cannot love God, or repent of our sins, if we cannot do good works or have joy and peace without this knowledge, why do we focus so intently on our personal, spiritual experience? I submit that the fuel for every part of our Christian journey must be the intellectual knowledge of God’s truth, founded in his Word. If we start in the Word, and go back to the Word at every step, at every turn, then our hearts will inevitably follow, and our actions will demonstrate our regenerate nature. *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable are his ways!”* (Romans 11:33).

It is the continual study of the Word, the pursuit of Truth, and the desire to know the mind of God that will enable you to *“present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship”* (Romans 12:1b). Greater understanding of God, and thus true worship, is built upon diligent study.

I’m reminded of my first adult experience with fresh water bass fishing. A friend invited me to join him on his small boat, which was powered by oars, to fish a pond of no more than a couple of acres in area and probably no more than ten feet deep at its greatest sounding. Little did I know that this informal trip was to be the beginning of an all-consuming sporting endeavor. In the

ensuing years I read, talked, dreamed, ate, slept and breathed fishing. At the time, I did not foresee that it was to become my very identity. You fishermen/women know what I mean. Being “hooked” is an apt metaphor. From the way I’ve heard you golfers talk, I’m sure you know what I mean, too!

We set out on the water, rowing gingerly, doing our best to avoid disturbing the peaceful ecosystem. The late evening sky graded from azure blue to yellow to deep red as the sun was about to set; and the still water mirrored the green pines and fiery maples that surrounded the pond. The damp-fresh smell of the water and sounds of the loon and bullfrog rounded out my sensual experience. But all these things, as serene and beautiful as they seemed, belied the activity that occurred below. The world seemed still, but there was life hidden in the green depths.

The quiet was broken by the whip of the fishing rod and the plop of my plastic worm in the water near some lily pads about fifty feet away. Then another period of calm. My friend and I, the boat and some tackle, and the above-water, air-breathing realm was all that I knew. What was below was a mystery; there were two worlds.

Then there was a sudden series of jerks on my six-pound test line, pulls that were not felt, only seen by the eye. I reeled up the slack and sharply raised the rod to an abrupt stop. Fish on! In an instant relaxation became exhilaration. The two worlds had become one. Via the line, I had a connection to something that was unfamiliar, something wondrous. There was a transcendence that was beyond explanation.

I did not know how or why the fish decided to eat my fake worm, nor if it was even able to decide. I was not sure that its plan was to eat; having no hands and no voice, the creature has only its mouth with which it may engage its surroundings. Also, why was the fish living in that particular location? Was all this luck? If it was more than happenstance, how could I replicate the conditions and catch another?

Well, I was not able to do so again for some time. This matter needed study if it were to yield rewards. You see, I had experienced good feelings aplenty, but I sorely lacked understanding and knowledge. My friend, who could always succeed on the little pond, was not so invincible on other bodies of water. When I asked him why this was so, he admitted, after persistent interrogation, that he did not know. His experience taught him what worked but he did not know why. Repetition of a pattern, traditional lore and a gut feeling was all he had. I knew there had to be a better way and my heart was set upon succeeding as an angler. I postulated that knowable truth *had* to exist and my only chance for advancement was to study and research all the facets of the sport.

My competence increased as I read the masters and the periodicals. I studied the mechanics of the equipment, the habits and life cycle of the quarry, the effects of the weather, moon phase and other natural phenomena. I kept careful records of experiments I had formulated to test my theories. Did you know that there is even philosophical literature based on fishing? Yes, all my efforts paid off, big-time. Years later, I was able to find fish regardless of the

species, habitat or time of year. I even knew when it was a waste of time, and I would laugh at the tyros who would stand in icy water for hours to no avail.

The focus had become the learning, rather than the moment. I put aside the guesswork and sought out truth. If I had never committed myself to in-depth study, I would have been mired in ignorance. Instead, as my knowledge grew, so did my reward. And so it is with our faith journey.

Perspective check: What if I had pursued bass fishing as an intellectual exercise alone? Well, then I would have become an expert in something I was not able to do. Angling was in my heart. I would have thought it ridiculous to have all the knowledge in my head but never put it to the test. There will be plenty of Bible scholars in hell, I suspect. *“For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God”* (Romans 10:2-3).

What if I learned all I could, increased my success and caught many fish but none of this stirred an emotion in me? No joy; no reward; no usefulness. The emptiness and meaninglessness would have deterred further progress. Labor for a worthless cause is hypocrisy. *“For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation”* (Romans 10:10).

The Christian life is marked by the conversion of the mind, heart and will; of these it is the mind which is most affected by

the Holy Spirit. The Father calls upon the heart and we have the free will to accept or reject his free gift, but the decision to accept is made intellectually; we are *convinced* of God's promise. Once the gift of salvation through belief in Jesus is realized, the process of *sanctification* by the Holy Spirit continues until physical death. This sanctification, or becoming more Christ-like, occurs through the teaching of the Spirit, who enables us to *know* God through study of Scripture and prayer. "*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*" (Romans 8:6). The Bible is full of teaching about sanctification - and so are the Bible scholars (who do not necessarily agree about its genesis or evolution), but living a transformed and *transforming* life in Christ requires ever-increasing knowledge of the Triune God.

It's OK to be caught up in the emotion of a worship time when the hearts of so many are joined to one another through Jesus the Christ. It's perfectly healthy to go to tears before the magnificence of God's creation. It's expected that we feel a loving connection to your Christian brothers and sisters. But it is not OK if it is not in your heart. And you won't go very far for the Gospel or for your own sanctification if you don't have a solid grasp of your confession. Do you want to be closer to God? Do you want to be an ambassador for the Gospel? Do you want to leave the old behind and live as a new creation? Then "*do not be conformed to this world, but be [continually] transformed by the renewing of your mind, so you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect*" (Romans 12:2).

Making Headway Painfully

By Superintendent Mark R. Galloway

About a decade ago now, while on a vacation in which Sharon and I and our four children were visiting my parents (who were at the time residents of Venice, Florida), I spent the part of a bright, sunny (but quite windy) day on the gulf coast of the Sunshine State watching several men (from their boats) casting their fishing lines into the sea.

As I stood on a jetty that extended some 100 yards out into the bay, I observed with interest one particular young fisherman in a rowboat as he slowly, but steadily, made his way back to the shore. Because the wind was in his face and the tide was going out, his goal of getting back to land was being made significantly more difficult by the forces of nature than he would have liked it. All in all it took this fisherman nearly fifteen minutes to row the mere 100 yards back to the dock. I could see in his strained physical gestures while at the oars and in his contorted facial expressions that this man was not particularly pleased with having to put out so much effort to travel such a short distance.

The incident of having witnessed that fisherman's struggles that day in Florida has often served to remind me of an instance when the disciples of Jesus, who (like that young seafarer in Venice) were fishermen, also experienced rough conditions while in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.

According to the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Mark (6:45-52), Jesus, immediately after

his miraculous feeding of the five-thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish (Mark 6:30-44), at dusk, sent his disciples out on a boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Meanwhile (we are told by the Evangelist), Jesus went up on a mountain (that is, one of the hills that hug the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee) to be alone and to pray.

From this elevated vantage point (which was probably some 300 to 400 feet above sea level), Jesus could see the disciples out on the water. A strong head wind (*“an adverse wind”* as the New Revised Standard Version translates verse 48) was blowing across the waters and the sea was becoming quite rough. Our Lord, Saint Mark tells us, could see *“that they were straining at the oars”* (6:48). Or as the English Standard Version (our pew Bible at the Church of The Apostles) translates verse 48, Jesus could see, *“that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.”*

Making headway painfully. This simple phrase is (it seems to me) an amazing insight into the kinds of difficult obstacles we often experience in our journeys as Christians in this world. Is it only me, or do all of us feel (at least occasionally) that we are only *making headway painfully* in this life? The fact is (of course) we often find ourselves concerned or even upset and quite anxious

about the uncertain future of both our individual, familial and corporate lives in Christ. Folks like us are usually eager for a solution to our problems. We are hungry for peace and healing in our lives.

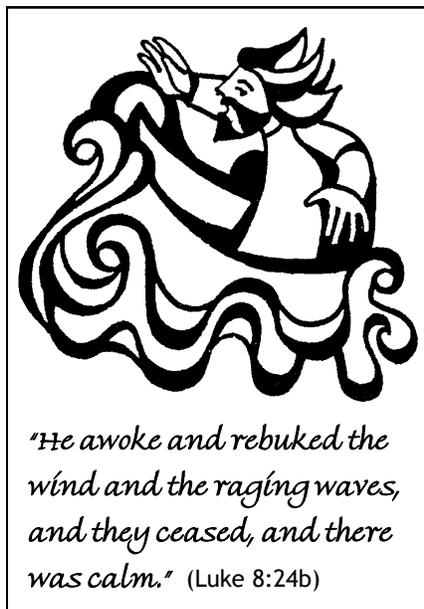
As chief pastor of a Christian flock, it would (however) be naïve and imprudent for me to imply that *“the peace of God which surpasses all understanding,”* of which Saint Paul speaks in

his Letter to the Philippians (4:7), can on a regular basis be instantly invoked into our often chaotic and complicated lives and routinely have the effect of immediately quieting and calming the inevitable storms that rear up in every human life.

Indeed, for each one of us (to at least some extent), *making headway painfully* is, and will continue to be, the story of our lives. In fact, for those of us who are willing to acknowledge that this epic struggle must be an accepted part of living

life on this side of God’s glory (in whatever form such struggle may take) great strength can be gathered from knowing and trusting that the Word of God is always faithful and true.

The blessings of peace and healing, which the philosophies and civic structures of this world cannot give, are ultimately to be found only in the great promise of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: *“Remember, I am with*



always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

In the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke we read of another story of the disciples together in a small boat on the Sea of Galilee. This time, however, Jesus is in the boat with them. Our Lord is sleeping in the stern. A storm with ferocious winds suddenly rears up with what Luke calls “*raging waves*” and which in turn begins pouring water into the boat. The disciples, fearing for their lives in a panic, wake up Jesus, saying, “*Master, Master, we are perishing*” (Luke 8:24).

Imagine how frantic the scene must have been. Instantly, by the mere power of his voice, Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves and the raging storm is calmed. Then Jesus, turning to his disciples, asks the paramount question of those who would choose to follow him, “*Where is your faith?*” And Luke tells us that “*the disciples were [then] afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, ‘Who is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?’*” (8:25).

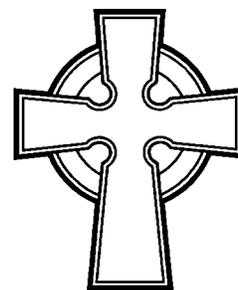
The point to be learned here is, of course, that like the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee long ago, the fierce storms of our lives can only be calmed by putting our faith in the cosmic Christ, he through whom (as Saint Paul reminded the Colossians) “*all things were created, in heaven and on earth*” (1:15).

For true Christians, peace and healing only becomes our reality when we come to recognize and embrace the presence, the grace, and the infinite power of Jesus Christ in our lives. And this rarely, if ever, happens

over night, not even for the most faithful and sincerest searcher of the LORD’s will for one’s life. And while this may seem like a frustrating fact for those of us who are only “*making headway painfully,*” let us not loose heart and forget the faithfulness of the Christ who promises to walk on the sea with us in our storms, and says to us in our darkest fears and deepest needs: “*Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid*” (Mark 6:50).

Because in the struggle of living the Christian life in a hostile environment we who remain faithful ARE making headway – no matter how painful or gradual it may be – we are called (as Saint Paul reminded the Galatians) to “*not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap [the reward], if we do not give up*” (6:9).

As we live as faithful Christians in our un-Christian world, we become more and more aware of the unfathomable power and literal presence of the LORD, especially when we honestly reflect upon all of the love and grace that he has already lavishly showered upon us through these years in which we have journeyed with him in faith – yes, even when as his disciples we “*were straining at the oars*” and only “*making headway painfully.*”



Church Council

Superintendent

The Reverend Mark R. Galloway

Board of Elders

Elder Chad W. Tvenstrup	385-9958
Elder Nina N. Deuel	789-3837
Elder Robert J. Geoffrey	943-4661
Elder <i>Emeritus</i> Conrad J. Ruppert, Jr.	

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Deacon Kathleen M. Kettle <i>Stewardship Minister</i>	822-2460
Acting Deacon Harry E. Sacchetti <i>Buildings and Grounds Minister</i>	374-4273

*“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities;
for there is no authority except from God,
and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.”*

(Romans 13:1)

Church of The Apostles

Evangelical Anglican

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*"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of the bread and the prayers."*

(Acts 2:42)

Worship and Education

The Holy Eucharist	Saturday 5:00 p.m. Sunday 8:00 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.
Christian Education	Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Sunday Brunch	Sunday 12:00 noon
Worship and Bible Study	Sunday 6:30 p.m.
Morning Prayer	Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m.

Church Staff

Superintendent	The Reverend Mark R. Galloway
Church Administrator	Barbara Battey
Communications Officer	Barbara A. Bickerstaff
Christian Education Minister	Chris Lloyd
Pastoral Assistant	Roberta Tvenstrup, MSW, LICSW
Youth Minister	Roger Hall
Health and Wellness Minister	Sharon Galloway, RN
Organist and Music Director	Marianne Salisbury
Sacristy Minister	JoAnn Ruppert
Property Maintenance Technician	Jim Quinn
Sexton	Ray Martin
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