

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness
Copake Falls, New York
June 2013

Thoughts from the Wilderness

At the recent high school baccalaureate service, I acknowledged what we all know – it's an age of information overload. Computers, smart phones, TVs, etc. are constantly bombarding us with information. That means discernment is important. Discernment of the truth, discernment of what is good and helpful, discernment of what is harmful or just a waste of time. It's not easy.

We want to be wisely open-minded. And we want to grow in wisdom, grow in discernment, which takes prayer. In order to pray, we need to make it a priority by regularly carving out quiet time where we can get alone and turn off the technology and listen to God.

What's exciting is that when we do this God does commune with us! God speaks to us. Probably not in an audible voice. But when we can get quiet and consciously open ourselves to God, God will communicate God's love and peace to each of us personally – because God is a personal God, revealed for Christians most clearly in the face of Jesus – who loves us.

When we experience God's love, then we will have discernment – because discernment is a gift from God. When we ask for discernment, God will give it to us. "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (*James 1:17*)

With wisdom generously given to us by God, as we take the time to receive it (in quiet prayer), we can wade through the overload of

information, and discern what to focus on. With God's help, we'll figure out what is truly inspiring and wise. And then God will guide us as to what to do one day at a time.



As James says, God is generous, and in fact the *source* of every good gift – including wisdom. "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you." (*James 1:5*) It's important to know the difference between wisdom and shrewd, selfish ambition. "The wisdom from above is first pure,

then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy." (*James 3:17*) This is a high standard, but God will help us to grow in this kind of wisdom – as it is a fruit of the Spirit working in us.

James is also clear about what wisdom is not: "But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind." (*James 3:14-16*)

James is blunt about the difference between true wisdom and false wisdom. False wisdom might also be called cunning or power politics. James in chapter 4 recommends humility as a way to access God's graced wisdom: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." *James 4:6* (quoting

Proverbs 3:34). Life provides us all many opportunities to grow in humility. That's simply because we're human. "All of us make many mistakes." (*James 3:2*)

Of course there is a difference between humility and humiliation. God loves each of us in our wonderful, gifted, creative, imperfect, mistake making humanness. God does not want any of us to tolerate abuse (verbal or physical); he wants us to love ourselves enough to take care of ourselves and (safely) stand up for ourselves.

Since God is all good, is more powerful than we are, and knows more than we do, humility is generally the right and safe disposition toward God. "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." (*James 4:10*) There's the paradox:

what God wants is to exalt us! We need to let him by humbly realizing our need for God's wisdom and simply letting him give it to us (e.g., in quiet prayer).

We need wisdom, as people and things in life will sometimes hurt us. And we need wisdom to deal with God's many blessings. The first blessing being *Life itself*, a good gift from a good God – a God who wants to lift us up! As God says, "I know the plans I have for you... plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you." (*Jeremiah 29:11, 12*)

Thank you and peace,

*In peace,
John+*

Notes from the Senior Warden

Summer is upon us and we are off and running!!! For such a little church we certainly have a lot of activities planned. It was very gratifying to see the generosity of parishioners and community members supporting the "Bands for Backpacks" program which was sponsored by our church and so well organized by Rebecca, Regina and Rosanne. I understand that over \$1400 was made to support feeding at risk children during the weekends. Thank you to all who participated in this great cause.

As I'm sure you are aware, the weather has not cooperated with our bell tower renovation. The bell is down, the scaffolding is up and we are sure to see progress soon. Jack Alvarez spoke at the Roe-Jan library last weekend and we hosted a reception to thank our donors for all their contributions.

Our major fund raiser for the year is on the

horizon. The weekend is a lot of work but also very gratifying for those who participate. Join us, no invitation needed. Please begin looking around your houses and garages for treasures that might add to the auction. In keeping with our plan of the last few years we are not having a "trash and treasure" table, but Ellen Freeston (our auction Chairperson) is planning on doing her famous "lot boxes" so if you have items that you think might lend themselves to this, check-in with her. Also remember that the Pork BBQ happens on Sunday. Come and have lunch and bring a family or two. The food is great and the company is better.

The vestry has been working behind the scenes on looking at a plan for replacing our treasurer of over 30 years, Jane Peck. Jane has done a monumental job and makes everything appear effortless, but we have found that the scope of her responsibilities is too large for one person to handle. We have proposed to divide the position

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Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

Please send submissions including news of church members to peterlouise@gmail.com

Upcoming issues:

2013: *September 8, November 24*

Please submit reports, articles and news items two weeks prior to the issue date. Thanks!

into three parts, basically corresponding to an accounts receivable position (pledge recorder), accounts payable position (treasurer) and Investment manager. We have luckily had volunteers for each position but we are looking for volunteers who might like to work alongside these primary people as apprentices. We have specific job descriptions for each position. If you have interest

or feel a calling to assist in these roles, the vestry would love to discuss them with you.

We are looking forward to spending a fun and fruitful summer together at St. John in the Wilderness. Please come and join us in our many activities, invite family and friends for fun and fellowship

Karen Flynn

Brian Boom's confirmation



Brian Boom (far left) was confirmed by Bishop Love at the Cathedral of All Saints on March 30.

Condolences

Our condolences and prayers are extended to the family and friends of members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness who have recently died:

Arthur Peck
John Van De Water
Charles Knox
James Carlson
The Rev. Mark Frickey

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord; let light perpetual shine upon them.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of comfort: Deal graciously, we pray, with all who mourn; that, casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP pg. 505)

Portrait of Walt Zelle

Walt Zelle, retired Episcopal priest, husband, father, grandfather, member of and supply priest to St. John's and many other area churches, and community participant, was born and raised in Haddonfield, New Jersey. At the age of 13, he had his first date with Mibs, and as they say, "the rest is history." It all began in Madame Draper's ball room dance classes. Soon the romance blossomed, and on August 27, 1960 they were married in Grace Church in Haddonfield!

Walt was raised a Quaker, and attended a Methodist Church Sunday School. Eventually he felt that neither Quakerism nor Methodism was where he was coming from, that something was missing. His Dad's suggestion was to check out various area churches, and so off they went, his Dad finally suggesting the Episcopal church in Haddonfield (an added attraction being that Mibs

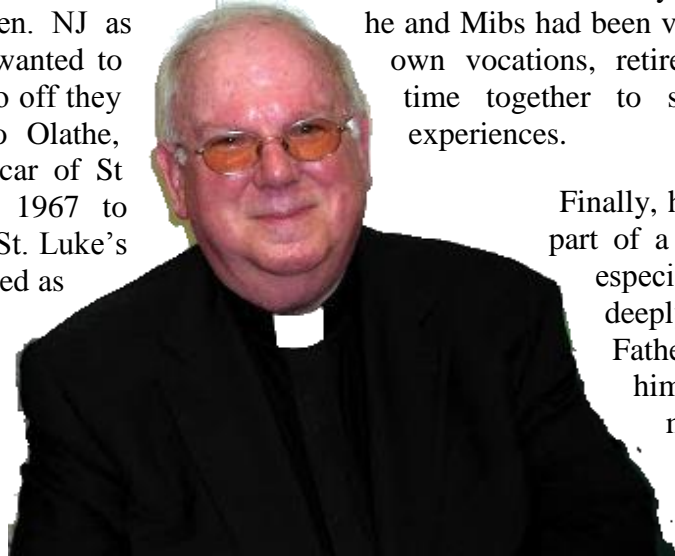
was a member there). Walt became active in Grace Church, and along the way began to experience a call to ministry. He spoke to the rector, Fr. Kell, about this but expressed some reservations about his fitness for ministry. Fr. Kell was very helpful, telling Walt that God's love was unconditional and that God accepts us, warts and all. So, Walt began to see the ministry as a call to help others just as Fr. Kell had helped him. Throughout his ministry Walt says that the heart of all that he preached, taught and tried to model, was that Jesus came to this earth to reveal a God of unconditional love. At age 15, Walt was baptized and was confirmed in the Episcopal church by the Bishop the next day.

He attended Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where his second biggest spiritual influence came from his professor of religion Bill Johnson, a Methodist, who has since become an

Episcopal Priest. This professor conveyed to his students an important message for Walt. The message was that the way God reaches out to each of us is through other people. This message has also been a big part of Walt's ministry, as he has encouraged members of his congregations to be that for each other.

Walt and Mibs were married the summer before his senior year at Trinity. Mibs taught history in Cromwell, Connecticut. Then, after graduation Walt went to The Philadelphia Divinity School, an Episcopal seminary, for 3 years, while Mibs joined the faculty of Haddonfield High School from which they had both graduated. Walt graduated in 1964 and went to St. Luke's, Metuchen, NJ as curate that year. Walt decided he wanted to "cut his teeth" at a small church, so off they went with their young family to Olathe, Kansas where Walt served as Vicar of St Aidan's Episcopal Church from 1967 to 1969. They ended up returning to St. Luke's Metuchen in 1970 where Walt served as rector for 28 years.

Walt's answer to my question, "what meant the most to you during all those years at St. Luke's?" was that St. Luke's ceased being ingrown and began to realize its mission in the world. He received training in helping alcoholics at Rutgers University, receiving his MSW degree from the Graduate School of Social Work there. The church started with a single Al-Anon group at the beginning with 33 such groups following. Most of them were 12 step programs. The question the church asked itself was "what are we doing as a congregation to reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters in the world?" Their answer took the



form of starting a homeless shelter, (there already was a homeless shelter for men, but not one for women and families). Other projects developed and the church moved from only taking care of itself to all out helping others. Walt was grateful to retire from a church of 750 communicants, who had a clear sense of mission, living out their baptismal covenant in the world.

How about retirement? I asked. What have been the best parts so far? Walt rated travel highly (Tanzania and Japan as the great trips so far) with Overseas Adventure Travel. Then, being a supply priest has been a wonderful retirement experience with such a wide diversity of parishes. Also, since he and Mibs had been very busy people in their own vocations, retirement has given them time together to share some wonderful experiences.

Finally, he has been glad to be a part of a wide circle of friends, especially at St. John's, and deeply appreciates the way Father John has welcomed him as a partner in ministry in this parish. It has been and continues to be a fine retirement for the Zelle family, lots of fascinating people to meet, and living life surrounded by the beautiful area of this southeastern nook of Columbia County. Walt says that Mibs and he awake every morning, pinch themselves and say, "Do we really live here?!!," feeling eternally grateful to God that they do.

Lucy Eldridge

Bell Tower report

Our bell tower restoration project is underway. Scaffolding was completed on May 10. So far, paint has been stripped from the old wood, making it possible to see which portions of the structure are in need of replacement. The bell has been taken down and is being repaired off site.

Weather has been a challenge since work on the scaffold cannot proceed during heavy rain and wind. But progress is being made and we anticipate completion this summer. A special celebration will be held when the bell is in place and can be rung again in Copake Falls.

On Saturday June 22 a special event was held in conjunction with bell tower restoration. Our preservation architect, Jack Alvarez AIA, gave a talk at the Roeliff Jansen Community Library on the significance of our church building, its architect Richard Upjohn, and the techniques being used in preservation. The event was attended by over fifty people, including church members and members of the Roe Jan community.



Tower Fund. It will now be the Upjohn Restoration Fund and will be used for preservation and restoration of the church building. A \$1000 leadership gift has been received for the fund. A needs assessment will be conducted this year and a fundraising target will be announced.

At the library, Dale Peterson AIA, the building committee chair, announced the Vestry's decision to rename the Bell

The building committee is grateful for the support of foundations, members and community friends who have made possible the essential work now underway and yet to come.

Dale Peterson

ECW report

The ECW held its quarterly meeting on the 6th of June at 6 pm. All women of the church are members, and we invite you to come. The next meeting will be September 3, 2013. Our Treasurer, Jane Peck, submitted her report for the ECW which covered January 1-May 31, 2013, and was passed by all members present.

fair and auction.

Unfortunately this was Jean Peck's last ECW meeting as she will be moving away to be closer to her family. Except for Altar Guild, Jean has served St. John in the wilderness in all its lay ministries. Jean will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by all who know and love her.

The ECW will be putting together two gift baskets to be raffled off on the day of the country

Jeanne Van Hoesen

Bruce Byers: "I truly felt at home"

Bruce Byers visited St John in the Wilderness this spring. He is the son of the Rev. John R. Byers, Jr., who was Rector from 1984-1986. Bruce is now a professional photographer based in New York City. His work can be seen at brucebyers.com. Bruce wrote these notes after his recent visit.

schools I went to they would bus us to church on Sunday and it was never the same. The church saw us a group of students forced to be there and never engaged us. This was never a problem at St John's.

I came to St. John's in 1963 with my family. My father was Father Byers to everyone that knew him. We had been in Terryville CT for 7 years at St Mark's and while we were away for the summer the movers moved us to St John. St John was my home till 1969 when I went away to school in the 9th grade. I would always come home at vacations and it never seemed like I had been away. At the

First of all I was the preacher's kid and had to be good (and of course I always was). My 5th grade teacher was a member of the church so my dad received a report once a week. I was part of the choir and sang solo for a few years at Christmas mass. My father had built-in help at the altar as my two brothers and I knew the service like the back of our hands. We were five kids and a handful but the members of the church always accepted us for who we were. It was a great place to come back to.

In 1987 my father retired from St John's because of his health. I know if he was well and still with us he would still be giving his life to the people of the church.

As a photographer I have over the past five years been photographing many churches -- the art, the celebrations and the buildings themselves. It is very hard for me as it brings back many memories of what I lived at St John and my father. Unless I am photographing in the church it is very hard for me to last through a service or just be in the church.



Photo: Bruce Byers

I truly felt at home. Except that the altar has been turned around everything was as it was. This became the problem as the memories and loss of my father came rushing back. I quickly began using my camera to document the day and that helped some what.

St John's is a great grounding place. A safe place. A place that accepts who you are the moment you step in the door. I have always had great respect for that feeling and have carried it with me through out my life.

My father's 11th commandment was always "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." It hasn't always worked but pretty close.

As a photographer I have tried to follow some of my fathers teachings by documenting medical missions around the world where I bring home the stories of children with far less than I that need medical help just to make it another day. It is my way of giving back.

Bruce Byers
byers@brucebyers.com

Sustaining Hope in the Face of Climate Change: Faith Communities Gather

Brian Boom reports on a church conference on climate change

On May 1 and 2, 2013, I was fortunate to be able to attend an important event held at St. John's Episcopal Church at Lafayette Square in Washington, DC, which was focused on the intersection of faith and environmental stewardship, specifically with respect to climate change. The gathering was co-hosted by The Episcopal Church and the Church of Sweden. Included among the nearly one dozen speakers and panelists were Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and Archbishop of the Church of Sweden Anders Wejryd, both very appropriately, because, in addition to their obvious religious credentials, Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori has Ph.D. in

oceanography and Archbishop Wejrvd has an honorary Ph.D. in the field of natural resources.

I had learned of this event through the announcements in back of our church program the preceding Sunday, and I immediately felt compelled to attend it because hearing about "sustaining hope" on an environmental topic was very appealing to me. As a professional biologist, environmental issues are daily concerns of mine, and I must admit based on my observations, research, and readings, I sometimes find it difficult to be hopeful about the sustainable health of our planet. So I checked out the program online thought it looked promising,

and then booked a train ticket to Washington. I was not disappointed with what I heard from the distinguished speakers. By the conclusion of the event, I did feel much more hopeful because I saw how faith communities, working together, could have an uplifting and positive impact on building a sustainable environment for ourselves and all life on earth.

The two-day event concluded with the issuing of a statement pledging concerted environmental action, signed by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, Archbishop Anders Wejryd, and Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

‘Abundant hope’ is possible amid climate despair.

Brian Boom

Book Review: Evolution of the Word

Borg, Marcus J. (2012) *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written* (Harper One, appr 600 pp.)

Would it surprise you to learn that the “books” of the New Testament are really not that but, in modern terms, booklets and pamphlets? Did you know that the Church fathers organized these documents chiefly in order of decreasing length? (Revelation, though long, bats last because of its description of the end times.) Or that the Gospel of Luke, which we usually think of as contemporaneous with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (ca. 70 CE), was in fact penned by the author of Acts some 30 to 40 years later? Luke and Acts are, in effect, Parts I and II of one book.

These and other startling facts emerge when the documents in the New Testament are arranged, as best it can be determined, by their order of appearance. Marcus Borg, retired professor of religion at Oregon State University, Canon Theologian at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, and a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar, has done so. Starting with 1 Thessalonians (ca 50 CE) and concluding with 2 Peter (perhaps 120 CE), he discusses the context in which each “book” was written, its intended audience, and its meaning for

Listed here are links from the conference:

Program for the conference

www.stjohns-dc.org/article/101/outreach/climate-change

Videos of conference events

episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/tag/climatechange/dc/

Text of the concluding statement

episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2013/05/02/abundant-hope-is-possible-amid-climate-despair/

that audience. An annotated text of each document follows Borg’s analysis of it.

Viewed in context and in chronological order, the components of the New Testament paint a vivid picture of Christianity struggling to define itself, a process that continues today. Canon Borg shows that by 100 CE, the Church had begun to accommodate to its socio-political surroundings, a process that would culminate in its official acceptance by Constantine in the Fourth Century. Whether that accommodation was good or bad news -- +Gene Robinson said in a sermon that “We’ve been in trouble ever since!” -- it was an important part of our faith journey.

Unless you are committed to the traditional arrangement of the New Testament, you will find *Evolution of the Word* a fascinating journey through the Church’s first century. If “600 pages” gives you pause (and/or you know the New Testament by heart!), you can quicken the tour by skimming or skipping the chapters of text.

Highly recommended!

Robert Dodd

Events in the Wilderness

Saturday, July 6. Bake Sale at Copake KOA.

Saturday, July 13. Our annual Country Fair and Auction.

Sunday, July 7. A special celebration of Jean Peck as she moves to Rochester.

Sunday, July 15. Pork Barbecue

Weekly events

Sunday.

8:00 am Spoken Eucharist.
10:00 am Choral Eucharist.
Sunday school at 10:00 am.

Wednesday,

3:00 pm Divine Reading / Contemplative Prayer Group.

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Newsletter of the
Church of St. John in the Wilderness
(Episcopal)
Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Karen Flynn, Sr. Warden
Rebecca Garrard, Jr. Warden

Vestry

Robert Dodd Dale Peterson
Martha Glantz Regina Shea
Kent Kay Jeanne Van Hoesen
Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry
Jane Peck, Treasurer

Eucharists

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)
Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

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