

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Lent, 2010

## A Word from the Editor

Many of you will be startled by this picture of our church. “Wasn’t there a big tree...?” you wonder. There was indeed and its many friends miss it. Unfortunately, those friends had come to include chipmunks, squirrels, and carpenter ants, who used the tree as a highway into the church and left their calling cards in the chancel. After much discussion over many years, the Vestry decided last fall that the big old oak had to go.

The good news about removal of the tree is that it has made our beautiful church – Richard Upjohn’s pride – more visible to passers by. St. John has a new look. So has this newsletter. The outgoing Editor (Marya Dodd) and the new one (Robert Dodd) felt that our unusual parish deserves a more distinctive name for its house journal than “The Messenger.” “Voice” rang a bell with many folks at the recent Annual Meeting, so *A Voice in the Wilderness* it is.

We plan to publish four issues of *Voice* each year: at the beginning of Lent, just before Easter, in late summer after the diocesan convention, and at the beginning of Advent.

Deadlines for submissions will be firm, but we shall announce each one at least two weeks in advance. We shall continue to publish a paper edition, but will also post *Voice* on St. John’s website.

*This is your newsletter.* Feel free to contribute suggestions and items of interest.

Robert Dodd, Editor  
[rdodd2@hotmail.com](mailto:rdodd2@hotmail.com)



## Thoughts from the Wilderness Lent, 2010

Has Lent become quaint? A season few, even in the church, give much thought to anymore? It's true that the idea of Lent as a time for putting one's enjoyment of life on hold for six weeks should be cast aside because Jesus is risen! The joy of that is now the heart of everything even during Lent. So does Lent have a particular relevance in light of our modern awareness that Christian asceticism in the past was too harsh and negative -- what with hair shirts and self-flagellation (not to mention the "asceticism" imposed on others by the tortures of the Inquisition and burnings at the stake etc.)? Does Lent have relevance in light of our postmodern relativizing of all absolutes? Does Lent make sense in light of the fact that Christianity itself and its source in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are frequently called into question or simply put on the back burner?

Obviously, if Christianity is not relevant, then Lent has no significance whatsoever. Of course, I think (or I'm in the wrong job as an Episcopal priest) Christianity remains relevant. So I believe Lent still has meaning as a time to focus on our faith and on prayer and other Christian disciplines -- in anticipation of Holy Week where we commemorate in a special way Jesus' life, death, and resurrection -- that is, his love for us. Christian or Lenten discipline no longer means self-flagellation. But it may mean a decision to improve our life of prayer and Scripture engagement by joining in our Divine Reading/ Contemplative Prayer group Wednesday's in Burke Hall at 3 p.m. Or we may decide on a traditional Lenten practice

like giving something up (e.g. fasting from food or some of our TV time) -- not simply to suffer -- but to make room in our hearts by the space hollowed out by our longing -- for God. Maybe we can give some of the money saved by what we've given up to those in need. We can, e.g., give to Episcopal Relief and Development. The Episcopal Church at General Convention 2009 proclaimed, "Lent is a time for self-reflection, meditation and prayer. Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday will serve as an opportunity for congregations across the country to engage with the Episcopal Church's ongoing commitment to fighting extreme poverty and disease around the world." We at St. John in the Wilderness are indeed celebrating ERD Sunday on the First Sunday in Lent, February 21.

Most important is that our Lenten disciplines bring us closer to God and to each other. And that means more, not less joy! Yes, Christian disciplines make more room for God and for others in our hearts and lives -- and this can involve the frustration of foregoing some of our own immediate desires. But Christian disciplines mainly promote the joy of increasing awareness of God's presence in our lives and in the lives of others. We grow in simplicity and in generosity to others -- especially those in need. And that's very good news -- the good news of being more aware of the Good News (the



Gospel). And then we don't have to be overly focused on the bad news in the world or in our personal lives. We don't deny it, but with God's help we are not "overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." (**Romans 12:21**).

A Lenten discipline then can lead to more consciousness of God; can lead to more life, and more meaning. So yes, the season of Lent remains relevant. Let's celebrate it with joyful practices inspired by our loving God.

**In peace,  
John+**

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### **From the Senior Warden**

The Annual Meeting, held on January 17<sup>th</sup>, ushered in the New Year for our church.

Fr. John began the meeting on a positive note by citing the many virtues of a small church such as ours. And, he announced the formation of a Contemplative Prayer Group and a Discipleship/Growth Committee. We elected new vestry members, Ken Fitzpatrick, Bob Callahan, Madeline Nicholson and thanked outgoing members, Dave Chittick, Sr. Warden; Bob Dodd; and Jeffrey Baker for their service. Wendy Langlois will be the Junior Warden and Lucy Eldridge will be Senior Warden. Babs Croteau, new President of the ECW, presented a check for \$600 to the church, which was thankfully received. Susan Mollo will be chair of the Country Fair and Auction on July 10<sup>th</sup> with Barbecue on July 11<sup>th</sup>. Reports from all the committees and groups, contained in the Annual Report prepared by Hank Croteau, were cited including the Treasurer's Report.

Discussion followed the Treasurer's Report regarding the \$9,000 deficit in 2010. The deficit was caused by a drop in investment income due to the downturn in the economy. Various suggestions were discussed to address this shortfall, including rental income, donations, extra donations from the end of month household budgets to a favorite church activity, such as the music program, etc . It was suggested that a letter be sent from the Vestry to parishioners and friends. This letter was sent the week following the Annual Meeting to launch the *Bridge the Budget Gap Campaign 2010*.

A lovely, and much enjoyed brunch was served by Betsy and Harry Garrett.

The church continues its tradition of providing spiritual comfort, beautiful music and community fellowship. One of our recent coffee hours after church was a wonderful birthday brunch including a big birthday cake celebrating Florrie Dwyer's 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. Our congratulations and love to her, and to all at the Church of St. John in the Wilderness.

**Lucy Eldridge,  
Senior Warden**

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### **Building and Grounds February, 2010**

As you all can well imagine, budget restraints have placed a barrier in the road to improvements and repairs at St John in the Wilderness. However, that does not mean we will not take decisive action on emergency problems that may arise. As soon as the weather breaks, the Building Committee will conduct a physical walk through of our facility to identify projects that need immediate attention and come up with a game plan

that we can report to the Vestry. In the past we have been very fortunate to have members of the congregation with native born and educated skills who have been able to apply their expertise to our needs -- and we thank them. This has really helped, realizing the cost of labor. Repairs and improvements, as minuscule as they may seem, still cost money and with a deficit of at least \$9000 staring us in the face, we are going to have to tread very softly.



The next Vestry meeting, February 12, 2010, will be in the past as you read this, but as of this writing it has not happened. At this meeting, we intend to bring up cost saving ideas to conserve energy and subsequently money to help bring expenses back in line with our income. And as such, we will keep you informed through this media on any items the Building Committee would be involved with.

**Respectfully,  
Hank Croteau**

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### **Episcopal Church Women**

Our first meeting of 2010 will be on

March 2, 2010, at 1:00 pm in Burke Hall.

Meetings are the first Tuesday of March,

April, May, June, September, October, and November at 1:00 PM in Burke Hall. The December meeting is usually held on a Sunday at a restaurant. If this is not convenient for the women of St. John's, please let me know and we will try to change/fix that.

We will be participating in a raffle for the

Country Fair and Auction. Pauline Royal is donating a Log Cabin Quilt she is making and this will be 1st prize. Please think about a second and third prize.

Please continue to support your local food pantry. Thank you.

**Babs Croteau**

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February 19  
March 8  
March 11  
March 18  
March 20

Marilyn Kay  
Margaret McClurg Miller  
Dora Van Tassel  
Kathy Tureck Kay  
Jessica Platt

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**From Senator John Danforth, Episcopal Priest -**

*"...faith brings recognition that our quest never leads us to certainty. We are always uncertain, always in doubt that our way is God's way. That self-doubt makes it possible to be reconciled to one another. It is faith that makes the reconciling work of politics possible."*

Faith and Politics by Senator John Danforth, Viking, 2006, pg. 53

## Coming Up:

As we move into Lent, you will want to mark the following dates on your calendar:

- \* February 10 and Wednesdays thereafter - **Contemplative Prayer/Divine Reading Group**, 3 PM in Burke Hall. (*See Special Notice.*)
- \* February 16 – **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper**, sponsored by the Roe-Churches at Our Lady of Hope Church, 5 to 7 PM. *All proceeds will benefit our ecumenical outreach program, Churches Assisting Neighbors (CAN). Please come!*
- \* February 17 – **Ash Wednesday** services at 10 AM and 7:30 PM.
- \* February 21 – **Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) Sunday**. (*See “Special Notice”*)
- \* February 28 – **Sunday Night at the Movies**. Dessert and movie, title to be announced.
- \* March 7 – *Winds in the Wilderness* concert, 2 PM. (*See “Special Notice”*)
- \* March 28 – **Palm Sunday** service, 10 AM.

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### Worth Special Notice:

- \* The chamber music series, *Winds in the Wilderness*, will hold its third concert on Sunday, March 7, 2010 at 2PM. It will feature The Trio (Music Director Sharon Powers, flute; Ellen Katz Willner, oboe; and Beth Craig, cello) with St. John’s Choir Director, Edee Hedrick, organ. A special highlight of the concert will be the premiere of a composition written especially for the series. Please come and enjoy the concert and yummy goodies at the reception following the concert!
- \* The Episcopal Church has designated February 21, the first Sunday in Lent, as Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) Sunday. We will observe ERD Sunday at St. John's and ask you to continue to pray for those in need who benefit from the work of ERD, e.g. the people of Haiti for whom you can donate on the internet at [er-d.org/donate-select.php](http://er-d.org/donate-select.php).
- \* Our new Contemplative Prayer/ Divine Reading Group held its first meeting on February 10 and will continue to meet at 3 PM on Wednesdays in Burke Hall. Facilitated by Fr. John Thompson and Lucy Eldridge, the Group uses a meditative approach to scripture and prayer and is an exciting new

opportunity for spiritual transformation. *Please join us!* Questions? Please call Fr. John (329-3674) or Lucy (329-0530).

\* You can contribute to closing St. John's wide budget gap in two ways. First, please give whatever you can to the **\*Bridge the Gap Campaign 2010\***. Your donation, large or small, will be gratefully received!

Second, remember that the **\*Country Fair and Auction\*** will be here before you know it. We need lots of furniture that's clean and in good repair, so please recycle your unwanted items to St. John in the Wilderness

\* **Budget Update (as of 2/11/10)** - Pledges now total \$58,900, an increase of \$2,900 from the time we approved the budget for 2010. With the increase in pledges and the *Bridge the Gap* money the budget shortfall is now \$8,618.00. The approved budget had a shortfall of \$14,814. We currently have 41 pledges, which is 3 fewer than 2009, but is an increase of \$3,901 in money pledged.

- Jane Peck

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## Beyond Copake Falls

Some important things are going on in the Episcopal and Anglican world beyond our parish. Beginning at the diocesan level, early reactions to the just concluded diocesan Parish Leadership Conference have been positive and have noted the soothing absence of "political" issues from the program. The event drew so many people – about 300 – that the venue had to be shifted from Greenwich to the Cathedral. I hope one or more attendees from St. John in the Wilderness will prepare a report on the PLC for the next issue of *A Voice*.

Two issues that should interest all of us are the proposed Anglican Covenant and the results of an historic episcopal election in Los Angeles. In December, 2009, the Anglican Communion published the long awaited Anglican Covenant, a quasi-legal contract that lays out traditional Anglican beliefs in much detail and provides means to encourage, even compel, provinces to adhere to them. An outgrowth of the 2004 Windsor Report, which was inspired in turn by the 2003 election of a partnered gay Episcopal Bishop, the covenant is equally unpopular with progressives and conservatives. Progressives foresee it transforming the Communion from a free association of historically related but autonomous provinces to a strongly hierarchical, confessional church. Evangelical conservatives, the most vocal of whom are in the provinces of the Global South, condemn the covenant as too weak to force progressive provinces like those of the USA and Canada back into their version of orthodoxy.

At each stage in the development of the covenant, its framers wisely requested comments based on wide discussion within each of the 38 Anglican provinces. Some provinces, for example those of

the Episcopal Church, Canada, Wales, and Scotland, provided the requested input. Others, including many whose primates boycotted the 2008 Lambeth Conference, did not. The Diocese of Albany has neither facilitated nor encouraged discussion of the covenant, though our bishop and Standing Committee endorsed an unfinished version of it in October, 2009. Given that our 2010 diocesan convention will be asked to affirm that endorsement, it is to be hoped that substantial discussion of this important document will take place this spring.

Those readers who would like to know more about issues raised by the covenant should read Fr. Walt Zelle's thoughtful essay in the last issue of *The Messenger*. You'll find other views and comments on the Albany Via Media website, [albanyviamedia.org](http://albanyviamedia.org), and on John White's blog, "Openly Episcopal in Albany" ([drbones.typepad.com](http://drbones.typepad.com)). The diocese's Canon Theologian, Fr. Christopher Brown, has recorded a presentation in support of the covenant. He reports that a DVD thereof will be available to parishes shortly.

The second item of particular importance to Episcopalians comes from the Diocese of Los Angeles. At its convention in early December, 2009, that diocese elected two bishops suffragan, the Rev. Canon Diane Jardine Bruce and the Rev. Mary Glasspool, the latter an openly partnered lesbian. The 120-day consent period for these bishops-elect began as soon as all Episcopal bishops with standing and diocesan standing committees were notified of their election. Thus we and the wider Communion should know by Easter whether Los Angeles has its first two female bishops and the Episcopal Church has its second openly gay bishop.

The consent process will be watched with great interest throughout the Anglican Communion. Will the Episcopal Church stand by its non-discrimination canon and approve the election of Mary Glasspool+, or will it yield to pressure from the Archbishop of Canterbury and others to back down? Early returns lean toward consent, but as Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over till it's over." If then!

**Bob Dodd**



**Lent begins**



