

A Voice in the Wilderness

Spring, 2010

Thoughts from the Wilderness

Greetings to members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness. A Happy Spring to everyone!

Our Discipleship/Growth Committee of Madeline Nicholson, Susan Mollo and I recently had our first meeting. We had some great ideas: like Greeters (in addition to ushers) focused exclusively on welcoming people, especially visitors. We also discussed creating *Welcome Bags* to bring to visitors. And we discussed bringing parish brochures to the upcoming bake sales and other community events. These three ideas were each endorsed at our Vestry meeting Friday night. So please pray as we go forward with these new ministries, and be open to being called on to participate in making them a success!

I will now address a serious issue; one difficult to talk about. *The Mentalist* (which I watch) is currently the most popular program on TV. The show has a lot of humor (for a murder mystery). But the deadly serious subject of human trafficking was a topic on the latest show. I'll say more on this shortly. People often say, Christians and others, that our society is permeated with sex and violence. Permeate is from Latin *permeare*, "to go through, to pass through." It seems that filters that may have been there in the past are breaking down, are being permeated. I've read that we now live in a "pornified" culture. A rather new word, it may have been coined by the author of a recent book entitled, *Pornified: How Pornography Is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*. Secular society struggles with balancing the rights of free speech and protecting people from obscenity. With the easy access to pornography that the Internet (and cable television) provide, it seems there are more and more consumers (mostly male of course)



of this commodity. And with its increasing availability and increasing use, there seems to be an increasing acceptance of pornography by the culture in general. So under the guise of "free speech" the multibillion dollar porn industry keeps pushing the envelope further and further.

Free speech is important to Christians as well as anyone who favors democracy and respect for the individual. However, though the sexual selfishness that is pornography may be legal, it is certainly wrong from a Christian perspective which requires the respect of all persons *as* persons, not as commodities to be used, to be bought and sold.

Of course open-minded Christians are often hesitant to speak against pornography for a number of reasons. For one thing nobody's perfect at avoiding sexually selfish or lustful thoughts. Also, there has been an unfortunate aspect of Christian tradition that in different eras has overreacted to the sexual excesses of their surrounding cultures. That is, there is a puritanical strain in Christianity that has often given the impression that sex and sexuality are bad. So we rightly don't want to be puritanical, when the fact that we are sexual beings is a gift from God; it's the way we're made. The beauty of human beings is real and good and attractive.

I recently heard Hugh Hefner interviewed on National Public Radio. The frequently friendly bantering with Hefner by the female NPR reporter seems to me a good example of my point about an increasing acceptance of pornography by mainstream culture. Hefner contends that he respects women, and that their freedom to be involved in this "work" is a healthy result of the sexual revolution. Of course there are good things about the sexual revolution, in terms of weakening puritanical and condemnatory attitudes about sex in the culture and in the church. Sexual sin is not worse than any other sin. And as Jesus said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." All of us are imperfect, including in the area of sexuality. But even if we fall short, from a Christian perspective it is important to maintain the connection between love and the wonderful gift of sexual expression. No matter how much mainstream acceptance the Playboy mentality may have, it must be called what it is -- a selfish, loveless, reductionist, objectification of another person.

God gives us the grace, when asked, to treat everyone with love, as sacred ends in themselves, not as objects to be used. And this is a general statement. People are not to be used as sex objects *or* as pawns in my quest to make money *or* as instruments in my quest for power. People are ends in themselves created by God to love and be loved.

One terrible way in which sex and violence have been combined in the world (including, believe it or not to some extent in the United States) is in the area of sexual slavery. This is an

example of the objectification of other human beings at its extreme. This may not be new; the tragedy is that it still exists in the world. It continues through deception (for example, vulnerable women are lured from one country to another under the guise of working as a 'nanny' and then beaten and abused into submission), through gross economic inequity, and through the continued unequal status of women in the world.

This can be heavy and depressing to think about. So may God give us the grace to be aware of what's going on without being burdened or obsessed with it. Then we can pray with hope about the things that need prayer in the world. And closer to home we can continue to pray and act against the negative aspects of our own culture. We do not have to be overcome by evil in the world or in our own hearts! Rather, with God's help, we can continue to overcome evil with good.

In peace,

John+

Praying Hands/Helping Hands

Albrecht Durer's famous drawing *Praying Hands* could also be called *Helping Hands*. Both of these titles work as symbols for the wonderful work accomplished by members of St. John's. Members regularly assist with projects including the ongoing maintenance of the church and grounds, altar guild preparations, floral and candle preparations, keeping track of our finances, ECW, choral work, communications work including *A Voice*, *The Bulletin*, and getting the word out about St John's.

A recent example of our pitching in to help out would be the Easter Egg Hunt held on the grounds of St. John's on April 3rd. Over 40 kids and parents from the community showed up to find eggs on our grounds and to enjoy refreshments and receive participant prizes. The event was made possible by Wendy Langlois, Director of the Sunday School; others helped out by stuffing the plastic eggs beforehand and helping out with refreshments and prizes.

Lots of members will assist with the upcoming Bake Sales this summer and fall at the KOA Copake camping resort to raise needed funds for the ongoing Bridge the Gap 2010 Campaign.



We will also volunteer at the June golf tournament at the Copake Country club on June 19th sponsored by the Roe-Jan Clericus to benefit the Roe Jan Food Pantry.

Of course, we will have many opportunities to volunteer during the upcoming **Country Fair and Auction and Pork Barbecue** on July 10th and 11th (the Country Fair and Auction is St. John's major fund raiser and has been held now for over 40 years. This year we have been blessed to receive an extensive collection of antique furniture, decorative items, linens, etc. from a generous donor).

The service of the vestry continues. Fr. John has suggested that we take turns with saying a prayer to begin the monthly meetings; the following prayer was given by vestry member Madeline Nicholson at our May meeting:

“Lord, we are gathered here tonight in Your name to accomplish the work you have set before us. Send the Holy Spirit to bless and guide us in making decisions that would benefit your servants and be consistent with Your will. In Jesus’ name we pray.”

Indeed, we are a church with many helping/praying hands!

Lucy Eldridge
Senior Warden

The Reappearance of Bishop Herzog

You may recall that after he retired as Bishop of Albany in 2007, +Daniel Herzog resigned from Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church and returned to the Roman Catholic Church. On April 29, at Bp. Love's request and after due consultation, the Presiding Bishop rescinded Bp. Dan's resignation and reinstated him to the ordained ministry in this Church. He will give Bp. Love badly needed help in our geographically huge diocese.

Inasmuch as Bp. Herzog has been physically present at Christ the King for the last three years, it would be inaccurate to say that he has *returned* to the Diocese of Albany. That he has *reappeared* has delighted the many Albany Episcopalians who regretted losing him to Rome.

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Building Committee

We are vastly approaching the time of year for Spring cleanup but the weather man doesn't seem to be cooperating. We

have several items in and around the church, rectory and our outlying boundaries that we need to keep our eye on. Especially trees that seem to flourish overnight to the point they need trimming. We are very fortunate to have in our ranks the infamous “Mountain Man”, Harry Garrett, who has a keen eye for such problems and keeps us pruned up and looking proper. Thanks a lot Harry.

I had previously mentioned that the Building Committee (Harry Garrett, Jane Peck, Bob Flynn, Charles Fox, and myself) was going to do a “Walk Through” and make note of some troublesome areas that need our attention and come up with a priority list to present to the Vestry. Unfortunately with weather conditions and scheduling problems, it has not come to fruition as yet. We still intend to have this task completed within the next few weeks. There are some items that need our immediate attention and some that are simply routine. Unfortunately, our repair/maintenance problems all require funding to some degree and as you are aware, that funding is not readily available for frivolous items. So, what it all boils to, when we do our “Walk Through”, we will have to address those items that need our immediate attention and some things may have to wait. In any event we will try to keep you informed.

During one of our cold spells back in February, the heating system in the church failed and services had to be held in Burke

Hall. Unfortunately we weren’t aware of this failure until arriving at the church on Sunday. This time we were lucky that nothing froze to cause any water problems. However, to see that this does not happen in the future, we purchased a Freeze Alert monitor that has been programed to call 3 preselected phone numbers if the heat falls below 45 degrees or if there is a power failure. Whoever receives the call of an emergency will have the responsibility to call the proper authorities to address the problem. It was not a big expenditure and there is not a monthly monitoring charge for this service.

Regarding the portable Handicap Ramp, there was some communications problems as to the proper way to install the ramp to maintain stability and safety at the threshold level and to provide a smooth transition over the threshold. To rectify this problem, the Vestry requested we provide explicit directions which will be posted in the Narthex.

Again, thanks for listening/reading to my rambling and as always thanks for bringing to our attention any problems you may encounter.

Hank Croteau,
Chairman

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The Anglican Covenant: Too hot, too cold, or just right?

In the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the heroine tries three bowls of porridge in the bears' house and finds one too hot, one too cold, and the third "just right." The proposed Anglican Covenant, which is making the rounds of the 38 Anglican provinces in search of majority approval, is like the bears' porridge. Some find it too hot: too confining for progressive provinces like The Episcopal Church, Canada, Wales, Scotland, and much of the Church of England. Other provinces, including most in Africa, find it too cold: too permissive to force innovative national churches like ours to either toe an orthodox line or leave the Anglican Communion. A communique issued after the recent Global South Encounter called for sterner demands on signatories and a more powerful oversight body: the Primates Meeting.

Does no one find the Covenant "just right?" Its loyal friends are few, but they include Albany's Diocesan and its Standing Committee. They endorsed it last October and are now pushing this summer's Convention to follow suit. To add pressure to do so, Archbishop Drexel Gomez, Chair of the Communion's Covenant Design Group, will be the principal speaker at Convention.

Albany is not quite alone – the dioceses of Dallas and Central Florida have endorsed the Covenant as it stands or will soon do so – but it is significant that other conservative

dioceses have not done so. Why must Albany make a decision now that the national Church will not – indeed cannot – make until the next General Convention? Why not follow the lead of the Province of Aoteroa, New Zealand, and Polynesia, whose next General Convention is, like ours, two years away? After a full day of discussion, its May synod endorsed the non-controversial descriptive sections of the Covenant, committed to give further discussion of the proscriptive section, and deferred a decision on the whole document until 2012.

Proposed in the 2004 Windsor Report and promoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the best way to unify the troubled Anglican Communion, the Covenant has had the opposite effect. Jim Naughton described the present situation very well on *Episcopal Café*.

"Though various factions throughout the Communion have complained about the Covenant, no faction has said definitively that it will not sign it. Why? Because everyone involved in this charade understands that the first party to walk away from the table loses. The Global South can't work its will on the Communion if it refuses to participate in its governing structures. The Episcopal and Canadian Churches can't defend themselves from further incursions if they bail out. Regardless of how much theological prattle ensues, the decisions on

whether to sign the document will be made on entirely political grounds.”

We must wait two years for our Church’s official reaction to the Covenant, but Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori spoke for many of us when she addressed the 2009 Convention of the Diocese of Central New York:

“My personal opinion,” she said in response to a question, “is that [the Covenant] is really an inappropriate structural response to a situation that is going to become more and more common. My shorthand is that it’s an Enlightenment response to a Post-Modern problem. Building more structure is not going to fix the challenge of living in a diverse community. *The challenge of living in a diverse community is most effectively responded to by building more relationships, not by building walls, and that’s hard work.* It’s easier just to say, ‘well, you’re not doing what we want, so goodbye.’ That’s not a Christian way of responding, that’s not living into the love poured out in Christ, in my understanding.” (Emphasis added)

Is the Anglican Covenant too hot, too cold, or just right? Maybe it’s just undercooked and needs more time on the back of the stove. A comment that Father Frank Wade made during an address to Albany Via Media is relevant:

“History shows us that it takes a long time for theological views to take shape or to

reshape. We have made terrible mistakes when we have sought premature conformity on theological issues. The Inquisition, religious wars, the Pope and the Patriarch excommunicating one another, persecutions, crusades, pogroms, holocausts and hatred are all fruits of that impulse.”

“Be still and know” springs to mind.

Robert T. Dodd,
Editor

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Bridging the Gap: An Update

St. John’s continues to raise needed funds for the Bridge the Gap 2010 Campaign. As of May 1, a total of \$8,236 has been received with 19 donors to the Campaign. In addition, St. John’s will hold 4 Bake Sales at the KOA Camping Resort store on holiday Saturdays of May 29, July 3, September 4 and October 9 from 11AM-1PM. Also, we will be participating in the June 19th golf tournament at the Copake Country Club sponsored by the Roe-Jan Clericus to benefit the Roe-Jan Pantry (50% of the funds go to the Pantry and the remaining 50% will be shared with the 2 participating churches, St. John’s Lutheran Church in Ancram and St. John in the Wilderness). We are very grateful for the

generous support to the Campaign and we thank our participants very much. We continue to ask for increased participation- gifts of any size will be greatly appreciated.

Lucy Eldridge, Senior Warden

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**Breaking New Ground
in Los Angeles**

On Saturday, May 15, 3000 people gathered in Los Angeles’s Long Beach Arena to see Diane Jardine Bruce and Mary Douglas Glasspool consecrated as bishops suffragan in the Episcopal Church. As described in *Episcopal Life Online*, it was a huge, joyous celebration replete with drums, bagpipes, a mariachi band, and a 125-voice choir whose selections reflected the rich diversity of the Diocese of Los Angeles. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori served as the chief of seven consecrating bishops. The others included +Barbara Harris, who, 22 years ago, became the first woman bishop in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

This was, of course, no routine consecration. Simultaneous elevation of two women to the episcopate would be newsworthy, but +Mary Glasspool became the second partnered homosexual bishop and the first lesbian bishop in the Church. As was true seven years ago when V. Gene Robinson became the Bishop of New Hampshire,

reactions to the consecration ranged from joy to outrage. The Rev. Susan Russell, former President of Integrity USA, said, “What we do here today isn’t just for this diocese but...it’s a beacon of hope to everyone looking for a community willing to lead in love, justice, and compassion for all people.” Leaders of England’s conservative Anglican Mainstream said, “Sadly, this shows that TEC has now explicitly decided to walk apart from most of the rest of the Communion. They added that a consequence should be the Episcopal Church “withdrawing or being excluded from the Anglican Communion’s representative bodies.”

In anticipation of negative reactions at home and overseas, the Presiding Bishop wrote to her fellow primates in March, when Mary Glasspool had received enough consents to be consecrated:

“Know that this not the decision of one person, or a small group of people,” she wrote. “It represents the mind of the majority of elected leaders in the Episcopal Church, lay, clergy, and bishops, who have carefully considered the opinions and feelings of other members of the Anglican Communion as well as the decades-long conversations within this Church. It represents a prayerful and thoughtful decision, made in good faith that this Church is ‘working out its salvation in fear and trembling,

believing that God is at work in us.’
(Phillippians 2: 12-13).”

Or, as Mary Glasspool told a gathering of media on the eve of her consecration, “We are being the church that we say we are.”

Robert T. Dodd,
Editor

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Episcopal Church Women

St. John's ECW met on May 4th. There were 11 women in attendance. Raffle tickets are ready to sell.

Copake Falls hamlet wide tag sale is May 29 and ECW will sell raffle tickets at the old school house on route 22 that day. Volunteers so far are Ginny Boughton and Edie Froggatt. When they wish to retire the sale will move to Susan Mollo's yard sale.

On June 1 there will be a regular ECW meeting at 1:00 pm.

On June 19 Copake Day at Copake Park Babs Croteau will sell raffle tickets from 12-1. Pauline Royal and Susan Mollo will sell raffle tickets 12-2 and Mibs Zelley and Jean Peck will sell 2-4.

We will be inviting West Copake Women to our meeting Monday Sept. 13 at noon for a covered dish luncheon. Final details will be coming in June.

Looking further ahead the October 5th meeting will be Election of Officers.

November will be the 2nd. Both of these at 1:00 pm. Mark your calendars and plan to attend.

All available and able women are asked to assist and volunteer for the Country Fair and Auction in July.

Please also bake for the Bake Sales in West Copake and make extra for the Baked Goods table at the Fair.

ECW has busy days ahead.

Thanks to all the volunteers.

Babs Croteau,

President