

# The Messenger

The Church of St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls, NY

A Non-Network Church in the Diocese of Albany

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Pentecost 2008

## Father Walt's "In the Wilderness Musings"

In this issue of The Messenger I'd like to finish my series on "Living the Church Year". I ended my column in the last issue with a discussion of the events of "Passiontide", commonly known as "Holy Week." Passiontide ends with the commemoration of Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday, and His laying in the tomb on Holy Saturday. But "on the third day" (Sunday) Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God (the Resurrection) - the single most important event in the life of Jesus..Just as in Judaism the defining event was the Passover, where the Israelites were rescued from the living death of slavery in Egypt to a new life in the promised Land though the power of God, so the defining event in Christianity is our rescue from the living death of our slavery to sin and biological extinction to new and eternal life in the Redeemer..St. Paul explained it by saying that we are "buried with Christ in Baptism that we might rise with Him to newness of life." The Resurrection of Jesus is so central to our faith as Christians that Paul was able to write in another of his letters, "If Christ be not risen, our faith is in vain." The resurrection became such a focal point in the Christian religion that we replaced Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, with Sunday, the day of our Lord's Resurrection as the day set aside for corporate worship. It has been said that "every Sunday is a little Easter."

"Easter" is an anglo-saxon word

from the Greek (eostra) which literally means "Spring", the source of the resurgence of new life in Creation. It shares its Greek root with the word "estrogen", the hormone which gives rise to fertility. Easter is all about rebirth and new life in this life and in the life to come. It is all about liberation from the slavery to death-dealing ways of life that imprison us and keep us from radiant new ways of living which allow us to blossom and become what St. Paul, again, referred to as "New Creations." Our arms, that were once wrapped tightly around ourselves in a fearful self-centeredness, are now extended to reach out to others in love - loving each other as Christ loves us - allowing Him to live his loving life through us.

This passage from death to life, which is the central theme of the Easter Season, finds expression in the liturgies of Eastertide. There stands prominently in the sanctuary during the 50 days of the Easter Season what is known as the "Paschal Candle," with a cross and five wax nails imprinted on it representing the nails in Jesus' hands and feet, and the spear wound in his side, now a symbol of light and life. The word "Paschal" comes from the Hebrew word "Pesach" - or "Passover." We often refer to Easter as the Paschal Feast for it is the Christian Passover. The color of the vestments and altar hangings is white - the color of joy and celebration. And the "alleluia", which we symbolically "buried" the last Sunday after Epiphany and which remained buried throughout the lenten

Season is now resurrected and is sounded again and again in the Easter liturgies: "Alleluia, Christ is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia!!"

For forty days after the Day of Resurrection (Easter Day) the Gospel readings recall Jesus' walking this earth and appearing to his disciples again and again: on the road to Emmaus, by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on many other occasions. On the fortieth day Jesus "ascended into heaven" (The Feast of the Ascension - always celebrated on a Thursday - 40 days from Easter Sunday.) To the early Christians who believed in a flat earth and a three storied universe, Jesus literally "went up" to a geographical location high above the earth known as heaven. In a post Einsteinian world theologians tend to speak of "ascension" in the metaphorical sense of rising to a higher state of being in another dimension of existence in the nearer presence of God "in whom we live and move and have our being." The Risen Christ resides now in a spiritual dimension of existence which allows Him to be a "Universal Presence - as near to us as the air we breathe, but as far away as the farthest star," where He now reigns as "Lord" (the controlling center) of our lives.

Ten days later on the Feast of Pentecost, which literally means the 50<sup>th</sup> day, Jesus fulfills his promise to the Christian community, which had gathered in His name, that he would not "leave them without support, but would come to them and infuse them with His presence, to empower them to allow Him to live His life through them." It was a powerful event, with a great wind (in the Hebrew, *ruach* - which can also mean 'spirit' or 'breath') and flames of fire hovering just over their heads, inspiring

them to be "on fire" with the Gospel message. (The Bishop's miter - the pointed hat he/she wears - is a symbol of the Bishop's calling to be a defender of the Good News of the Gospel). The apostles were driven out to proclaim that inclusive "Good News" in such a way that all who heard them preach "heard in their own language the wonderful works of God." The liturgical color for the Feast of the Pentecost is Red - the color of fire and, derivatively, the color of the Holy Spirit. The Day of Pentecost is the last day of the Easter Season, and the paschal Candle now takes its place by the baptismal Font, the place where we are "born again, and receive the life of the Risen Christ" and is lit only when Baptisms are performed.

The Sunday after the Feast of Pentecost is commonly known as "Trinity Sunday". It is the only festival of the Christian Year that commemorates a doctrine rather than an event in the life of Christ. It reminds us of our doctrine of God which states that we believe in one God who manifests Himself to us in three ways: as the Creative Source of all that is (Father); as His own self-expression, revealing Himself in human form (Son); and as an indwelling presence in our lives which empowers us to do what He calls us to do, and be whom he calls us to be (Holy Spirit). The liturgical color is white and the symbol is either three intersecting circles or a triangle.

The following Sunday we embark on a long teaching season which extends throughout the summer and fall and ends on the last Sunday before the First Sunday in Advent (in late November or December) when we come full circle and begin, once again, to trace the life of Christ. The liturgical color is green - the color of nature - since there's no specific event to be symbolized. Our Roman Catholic friends

call these Sundays after Pentecost the “Sundays of Ordinary Time”. The next such Sundays in their calendar as well as ours which have green as the liturgical color are the Sundays which fall between the Feast of the Epiphany and Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent.

But, for now, given the Sunday that this issue of The Messenger will be made available to you, let me wish you a happy “Seventh Sunday of Easter” also known as “The Sunday after the Ascension” and join with you in looking forward to the Day of Pentecost next Sunday often described as “the Birthday of the Church” and which is, with Christmas and Easter, one of the three major festivals of our Faith.

Affectionately,

Father Walt

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## PARISH GOALS

Just as the Spring season brings new growth in nature, themes of newness, growth and diversity are underlying themes of the work of the Search Committee. Indeed, the goals of the parish which the search Committee are well aware of, as determined by the parish survey, are :

1. Reach out to the community
2. Grow our membership
3. Explore new ways into which God may be leading us
4. Develop diverse Christian Education opportunities for all

As mentioned in an earlier article, the parish profile, which states our four goals, has been sent to possible candidates for rector along with two questions:

1. What about our profile leads you to believe that God might be calling you to be our next rector?
2. What in our profile would you find personally challenging?

Some of the answers to these questions relate to the theme of new growth with its connections to change (attempting new projects, doing things differently)

The Parish Profile has been met with such interest by both potential candidates and parishioners that we will be re-working it so it can be distributed to a wider audience of people interested in the work and mission of the Church of St. John in the wilderness.

As mentioned in a previous Messenger article, a related activity of the search for a new rector has been the development of the church’s web site ([www.stjohnsw.org](http://www.stjohnsw.org)). Charley Musselman has volunteered to train the core working group; for the web site to enter calendar items, and to think of ways to improve the web site. Charley has also sent the working group a related article from the Alban Institute, *Our New Front Door - How Congregational Web Sites Communicate Church Vision*, <http://www.alban.org/conversation>). Successful church web sites have been those which clearly welcome new people to its congregation. That is certainly a creative and important was to “explore new ways into which God may be leading us”.

Lucy Eldridge, Chairperson

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## Beyond Copake Falls

This has been an interesting year in Anglican Land, and it promises to become even more so. Our Bishop, who has just returned from a one-day strategy conference of Network bishops in Chicago, can look forward to meetings in Speculator (Albany's Diocesan Convention, June 6 to 8), Jordan and Jerusalem (Global Anglican Futures Conference [i.e. *GAFCON*], June 16 to 29), and Canterbury (Lambeth Conference, July 16 to August 3).

In normal times, the decennial gathering of bishops at Lambeth would be the big event of the summer. Begun in 1867 as a way to coordinate the theologies and philosophies of six far-flung Anglican provinces (St. Paul would recognize *that* problem!), Lambeth changed dramatically as the Anglican Communion grew to its present complement of 38 provinces. The 1998 Conference, at which the issue of homosexuality was a flash point, widened cracks in the Communion that afflicted earlier Conferences as well and owe more to different views of scripture and hierarchy than to the presenting issue of who can sleep with whom.

The bitter residue left by Lambeth 1998 was magnified in 2003 by the election of the Episcopal Church's first openly gay bishop, New Hampshire's +V. Gene Robinson. That decision crystallized opposition to our Church by many African, South American, and South Asian primates, whose anger at us and our progressive Canadian brethren now extends to the Archbishop of Canterbury as well. These primates, The Global South, and like-minded Americans in the Anglican Communion Network will meet at June's *GAFCON* in the Middle East.

*GAFCON*'s significance remains to be seen. Because the more outspoken Global South primates have vowed to shun the Lambeth Conference, Lambeth 2008 may well be more peaceful and productive than its predecessor. But does *GAFCON* portend fragmentation of the Anglican Communion? If it does, is that good news or bad?

Closer to home, the slow-motion collision between the Anglican Communion Network and the Episcopal Church continues. Bp. John-David Schofield and many members of the Diocese of San Joaquin have defected and joined the tiny but aggressive Province of the Southern Cone. The *Episcopal* Diocese of San Joaquin persists, however and is growing under new management. This pattern of secession and response may soon be repeated in the Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Fort Worth, each of which is just one convention vote away from trying to leave the Episcopal Church. No doubt, their efforts, like those of San Joaquin and a coalition of Network parishes in northern Virginia, will end in expensive litigation over who gets to keep the silver.

Still closer to home: This summer's Lambeth Conference may be less lively than its predecessor, but our 2008 diocesan convention may be explosive. It is rumored that a resolution to define marriage will be on the agenda. (We may hope that it appears early and not, like other controversial resolutions, on Friday of Convention!) AVM has put forward resolutions: 1) to dissociate from the Network; and 2) to do away with the practice of "parish choice," which allows disaffected parishes to stiff the national Church. There will also be a resolution to compel the Spiritual Life Center, which has absorbed vast diocesan resources and is still heavily subsidized, to acknowledge its *Episcopal* connection on its signage and in its literature.

As St. John's seeks a new Rector, we are proud that our parish is one of a few in this Network diocese that has turned its back on the Anglican Communion Network and its campaign to subvert and replace the Episcopal Church. With the encouragement of Albany Via Media, other parishes are following us, but St. John's led the way. "Not least of the cities of Judah..." That's Copake Falls!

Robert Dodd

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**CAN**  
**(Churches Assisting Neighbors)**

CAN and the Roe Jan Clericus are sponsoring a **Sunday Super Smorgasbord** at the Copake Community Day Sunday event on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. People from various churches are signing up to bring food for the event. Think about what speciality or dish you might like to make. There will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for folks from St. John's who would like to contribute something. All proceeds benefit the work of CAN which helps people right here in our community. If you prefer, financial contributions would be greatly appreciated. For more information call Susan Mollo at 329-0395

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**Episcopal Church Women**

The next meeting of the ECW is Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM in Burke Hall.

Raffle tickets for our Country Fair and Auction have been mailed out. If you have not received any and wish to have

tickets, please contact either Babs Croteau at 851-9040 or Marge McClurg at 325-3311.

We have 4 prizes this year:

1. Hand stitched **quilted multi-colored lap robe** made by Pauline Royal
2. Hand-crafted **birdhouse** made by Ralph Platt
3. **Framed original water color painting** by the artist, Susan Kibler
4. Hand-made **crocheted grannie afghan** made by Edie Froggatt

If you would like to help St. John's sell raffle tickets, please call Marge McClurg. We need to sell, sell and then sell some more! Arthur Royal will be helping, but we don't want Arthur to have to do it all by himself!

Marge McClurg is also looking for good gifts for the Boutique table and help to staff the table as well as setting it up. Come to the ECW meeting and volunteer!.

Dorothy Baker is closing out the United Thank Offering Spring Ingathering. Please contact her if you still have your blue boxes/envelope.

Marge McClurg, President

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**Birthday Candle  
Fund in May and**

**June**

- May 7 - Christopher Kay
- May 27 - Natalie Acciavatti
- June 10 - Alexander Kay
- June 22 - Henry W./ Croteau



## COUNTRY FAIR AND AUCTION

**Saturday July 12<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>**

The signs of Spring remind us that it's time to start planning for the Country Fair and Auction and Barbecue once again. Kathy Haight and I will be acting as general chairpersons and Harry Koepfel will chair the Auction. Lucy Eldridge is already working on publicity. The ECW has a selection of prizes for which they have been distributing raffle tickets.. The tent has been reserved and the auctioneer has set the date aside to be with us again. So you can see that a lo0t of preliminary work has already been done. This will be a busy weekend. We begin with a very large tent set on the hill near the graveyard so the event can take place rain or shine. On Saturday morning we have :tag" tables with everything from jewelry to toys, books and records, baked goods and gourmet foods, toys and trash and treasures. Any plants left over after you have set up your garden or landscaping, and surplus fruits and vegetables are also welcome. In addition, articles which are considered more "valuable", collectibles and memorabilia, are set aside and sold at auction later in the morning. During all this, Betsy Garrett and her kitchen staff will be manning the snack bar and there will also be a children's activity center headed by Jim Hendrick. In the early hours of Sunday Karen Flynn and her crew will start preparing our all-you-can-eat Pork Bar-B-Q which will be served at 1:00 PM. This is something not to be missed!

Now is the time to start looking around the house, attic, and garage to see what you can donate to the cause...and be sure to ask your family and friends, too. We accept large items as well as small BUT everything must be CLEAN, IN GOOD WORKING ORDER, and with AA THE PARTS AND PIECES ATTACHED. We CANNOT accept large appliances or clothing. At the close of the church school year in June, you will be able to bring your contributions to Burke Hall. If necessary, we can pick up your things as the day of the Fair approaches.

An organizational meeting is planned for Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, following the 10 o'clock service. We hope as many of you as possible will be there to ask questions and to offer your help and suggestions. (And we do need lots of help!!) Following the meeting a sign-up chart will be posted in the narthex. No special skills are required - just a willing heart and hands...strong backs are good, too!

Remember, this is our main fund-raising activity of the year. It's important that we get the word out early. Hope to see you on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Marilyn Kay

Co-Chair of 2008 Country Fair and Auction