

## E-Portion for April

**Holy Week Services**  
**Rector's Column**  
**Capital Campaign Update**  
**The Bishop Is Coming**  
**Youth Confirmation**  
**Adult Catechumenal Class**  
**Church School News**  
**Youth Group News**  
**Easter Bible Study at St. Francis**  
**Mission Matters**  
**Senior Luncheon**  
**Little Portion Deadline**  
**Corner Shop Scholarships**

### Holy Week Services

#### **Palm/Passion Sunday ~ March 30/April 1**

5:00 pm Saturday and 8:00 & 10:00 am Sunday Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Eucharist

#### **Wednesday in Holy Week ~ April 4**

7:00 pm ~ Holy Eucharist with Prayers for Healing and Anointing

#### **Maundy Thursday ~ April 5**

5:30 pm ~ Holy Eucharist and Foot washing

6:15 pm ~ Potluck Supper

7:30 pm ~ Holy Eucharist, Foot washing, Stripping the Altar (followed by Gethsemane Watch in the church)

#### **Good Friday ~ April 6**

8:00 am ~ Morning Prayer (Gethsemane Watch concludes)

12:00 - 3:00 pm ~ Ecumenical Service begins at Gazebo

12:30 pm ~ First Congregational Church

1:30 pm ~ First Baptist Church

2:30 pm ~ St. Francis Episcopal Church

5:00 pm ~ Stations of the Cross

7:30 pm ~ Good Friday Liturgy

#### **Easter Vigil ~ April 7**

7:30 pm ~ The Great Vigil of Easter

#### **Easter Sunday ~ April 8**

8:00 am ~ Festival Eucharist

10:00 am ~ Festival Eucharist

### Rector's Column

Last month I received a call from George Sherrill, Holden's Chief of Police, who asked me to consider serving in a newly created position as a volunteer chaplain to the Holden Police Department. After speaking with our bishop, wardens, and a colleague who is a fire chaplain in Longmeadow, I agreed to accept this invitation. I ask for your prayers and for your support as we begin to define what this might look like.

As I undertake this new ministry I will want to carve out some time over the spring and summer to meet with the officers and listen to their stories. I've been invited to ride with the officers at various times to see the world from their perspective. Parts of this work will come naturally to me: in one sense ministry is ministry and people are people. Over the years I have had varied opportunities to see many of you in your places of work as well as the work I did for my doctoral degree on faith and work. I expect, however, that other aspects of this ministry will take me out of my comfort zone. It seems to me, nevertheless, that since I have spent nine years pushing some of you to say "yes" to ministries that take you out of your comfort zones that I need to be willing to accept my own pastoral counsel!

When I reflect on this theologically, and as we prepare yet again to embark on the journey through Holy Week and Easter, it causes me to reflect anew on what it means to make the claim that we are an “Easter people.” As followers of Jesus who follow him not only to Calvary but beyond, to the empty tomb, we are meant to both share and embody “good news” in the world. Even people very new to St. Francis have a sense that we are living into a new sense of what it means to be “church-in-the-world.” We have a vision that all of God’s people are “ministers.” The role of a priest (and especially of a rector) is to focus on the congregation: to preach and teach and celebrate the Sacraments and offer pastoral care in ways that build up the Body of Christ. There are also administrative and managerial tasks related to staff and budget and the work of the diocese and wider church. (A priest promises at ordination, among other things, to take his or her “share in the councils of the Church.”)

These are always the first things for a priest. The danger, however, is that a priest can become overly “parochial” in the fulfilling of parish duties. Clergy can become inward-looking and insulated from the challenges of what it means to embody Easter faith *in the world*. Throughout my ministry I have been intentional, for precisely this reason, about having connections that keep me rooted in the challenges people of faith face in their day-to-day living of the gospel. While I believe that I do have some gifts to offer the wider community (and in this case, the Police Department), I have wanted to say yes to this work mostly because I see it as a way to continue to be connected to these worldly challenges. We are called to be witnesses of Christ’s love *for the world*.

Moreover, because my theology is grounded in the Incarnation, I am deeply aware that the resurrected Christ is already at work in the world. He has “gone ahead of us.” I don’t for a moment believe that I will bring Christ to the officers of our town because I believe that our resurrected Christ is already with them. My role will be to keep my eyes open for that presence and to stand with them in their struggles and in their joys.

In coming to this discernment it became clear to me that something needed to go in my schedule in order to maintain some degree of spiritual health and balance in my life. After talking with our bishop, I came to the decision to resign as a representative on the Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic (LARC) Commission, after having served in this capacity for several years. In addition, I’ve told the bishop that I will not seek re-election to Diocesan Council this October, when my three-year term will come to an end. That ministry has been a learning experience for me and I have enjoyed that work. But even though eligible for a second term I feel that it is time to step back and focus my energy more locally. (I will continue, however, to serve as chairperson for the Commission on Ministry as part of my wider ministry with the diocese.)

In all of this work—as always—I ask for your prayers. My first priority is and always has been as your pastor. A few months into my tenth year in Holden I do feel a renewed commitment to that primary sense of vocation. But I firmly believe that to do this work well is also to be representing St. Francis Church *in the world*. I see this work upon which I now embark as an extension of my ministry here, and pray that it will make me a more faithful and effective rector and Christian.

In Christ,  
Rich

### **Capital Campaign Update** **REFRESH, RENEW, REJOICE....**

You will have an opportunity to hear more details concerning the property renewal and the other aspects of the capital campaign at presentations after all services on the weekends of April 21-22 and April 28-29<sup>th</sup>. Please plan to participate!

Kathleen O’Connor for the Capital Campaign Committee

### **The Bishop Is Coming**

Confirmation—Sunday May 6, at the 10:00 a.m. service

We will celebrate with all who are being confirmed or received on that day, and their families.

We hope you will plan to join us for this celebration as we welcome Bishop Scruton.

### **Youth Confirmation Class**

The next Confirmation Class will be on Sunday, April 15th at 11:30 a.m. in the Library.

Don't forget to plan to attend Palm Sunday and Holy Week services with your Mentor, and then discuss your reactions with each other.

### **Adult Catechumenal Class**

7:30 p.m. in the narthex

- + April 25—Anglican History 101
- + May 2—Anglicanism Today: Finding a Middle-Way in a Polarized Society
- + Sunday, May 6—10:00 a.m. Our bishop visits for confirmations and receptions.

### **Church School News**

#### **Children's Music Offering**

On Sunday, May 13th (Mother's Day), the church school children will be invited to share a children's anthem during the 10:00 a.m. service. All children in preschool through grade 6 are encouraged to participate. Rehearsals begin on Sunday, April 15th, after the 10:00 a.m. service. Questions: Contact Sue Bastardo 508-829-0600.

### **Youth Group News**

It seems we're emerging from a very busy time! I wanted to report that we've raised a lot of money lately for hunger relief. Souper Bowl of Caring raised nearly \$300 (sent to Wachusett Food Pantry) and the Shrove Tues. Pancake dinner proceeds went to support the 30 Hour Famine, which raised over \$2200. This brings our total for 6 years' participation to over \$10,000! Many, many people have helped us with our many endeavors this past month, and I wanted to send out a huge THANK YOU (you know who you are!). Thanks for buying food for the dinner, setting up and cleaning up, cooking and serving pancakes, driving and chaperoning, sponsoring a fasting teen... the list is long. Thank you for helping make youth ministry so vibrant and for helping guide our kids in their efforts toward making a difference.

Peace,

Lori Churchill

### **Easter Bible Study at St. Francis:**

**The Acts of the Apostles** Tuesday Nights at St. Clare House, 7:30 p.m. (April 10, 17, 24 and May 1, 8)

Whether we locate ourselves on the left, or right, or in the "messy middle," we can probably all agree that it is not easy to be a Christian these days, and by extension it is not easy to be the Church. Yet, we are called to be an "Easter people" in a world of violence, degradation, and war.

As Christians we look to the Holy Spirit for guidance and to Holy Scripture to encounter God's Word. In the Acts of the Apostles we encounter that part of Scripture where the Holy Spirit is the star of the show. We encounter the first-century Church in Jerusalem where we see how Easter has transformed Peter and the other disciples into courageous ministers of the gospel.

Over the course of five Tuesday nights we will explore this book together, with one eye on the first century and another on our own 21st century context, as we ask where the Spirit may be leading us and how we might be engaged in ministry in this time and place.

- Tuesday, April 10 – The Church's Birth
- Tuesday, April 17 – Internal and External Challenges
- Tuesday, April 24 – To the Ends of the Earth
- Tuesday, May 1 – St. Paul
- Tuesday, May 8 – A Never-Ending Story

### **Mission Matters**

#### **Dismas House**

The Ash Wednesday offering of \$400 has been sent to Dismas House, Worcester. This organization helps the newly released from prison acclimate themselves back into society. Dismas operates a 12 unit residence—"Almost Home"—in West Boylston, in what used to be the Sheriff's residence. Their other location is a 12-unit residence on Richards St., Worcester, which has been in operation almost 20 years. Thank you for all your support.

### **Good Friday and Easter Offerings**

The Good Friday offering (April 6th) has been designated for the ministries of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem. The Easter Offering (April 8th) has been designated for the Episcopal Relief and Development to help build a water well to ensure a clean water supply for an entire village.

### **Heart to Heart Kids Kits**

Thank you for your generous response to our Heart to Heart Kids Kits—we were able to put together 30 kits which will be sent to the local distribution center in early May. They in turn will be distributed where needed. Special thanks to Susan Bastardo and the church school children for their help in putting the kits together.

**Mission Stitchin'** ~ During the Easter season please help stitch baptismal gowns for the Haitian Health Foundation. The gowns are used as an incentive for Haitian mothers to bring their newborns to the clinic for care. Patterns are on the Mission table in the narthex. You supply the material and labor. We hope to collect the gowns by Mother's Day. For more information call Eleanor Bird at 978-464-5564.

### **Upcoming Meetings.....**

Monday, April 16th at 10:00 a.m. ~ Prayer Shawl Meeting

Monday, April 16th at 7:00 p.m. ~ Mission Team Meeting

All are welcome.

### **Senior Luncheon**

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

Eucharist at 11:00 am

Reception at 11:30 am

Luncheon at Noon

Please R.S.V. P. by April 11th by signing up in the Narthex or by calling the church office at 508-829-3344.

**The next Little Portion deadline** is Thursday, April 19th.

**The Corner Shop** in Holden will be awarding two \$1,000 scholarships made available to any resident of the communities served by the Corner Shop. Students who have successfully completed one semester of study beyond high school at an accredited school or institution may apply. Application forms may be obtained from the Corner Shop located in the First Congregational Church, 1180 Main Street during shop hours (Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) or from the church office. The deadline for applications will be April 30th with awards to be made in June. Further information may be obtained by calling the Corner Shop during regular hours. 508-829-9270.