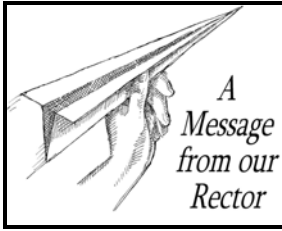


E-Portion – November 2008



Eighteen years ago, just after the birth of our first son, Hathy and I began to save for something that seemed to be an eternity away: Graham's college education (and then a few years after that, James's). This January we will be filling out that infamous FAFSA form and hoping that the gap between what we have saved (which is significantly *less* than it was six weeks ago!) and scholarships/loans is not an insurmountable one. It would be disingenuous to say that we have no financial worries; we do. But we are trying to counter all of that by

"considering the lilies of the field...they neither toil nor spin..."

In so doing, as we reflect on the *choice* between anxiety and gratitude, we are choosing gratitude (with God's help). There was a television commercial when I was a child that used to say, "if you have your health, you have just about everything." My grandmother (who cut things a lot closer financially than we do) used to be fond of repeating that whenever you asked her how things were going.

Early in our marriage, Hathy and I committed to becoming proportional givers. We decided that in order to keep God first in our lives, we needed to give to the Church first, and make all of our other financial decisions based on what was left over. It's a spiritual commitment to keeping first things first. Over the years it has become a holy habit, and we've learned that when our giving comes first there is always enough left over for what we *need* (even if not always to satisfy all of what we want). This burden is light and the fruits of this habit are gratitude, joy and trust. Nothing—not even college tuition payments or higher fuel costs—can negate that trust, which comes to us not as blind faith, but as an abiding awareness confirmed over many years that God is good. So our annual pledge to St. Francis Church for 2009 will be \$6,500. This represents the major portion of the tithe we will offer to God in the coming year. I share this with you in humility and love, not to draw comparisons or to embarrass anyone, but to bear witness to my deep conviction that making sacrificial offerings to God is essential to the spiritual life.

Over the years, I have sometimes been reminded by a member of the congregation that stewardship is about more than money. My response is always the same: "of course it is about more than money! But it is never about *less* than money." In fact, in our culture especially, the temptation to put mammon above God is very great. So if our theology and practice of stewardship *excludes* our money, then we deceive ourselves. Our financial stewardship truly is where the rubber meets the road. But all three aspects of faithful stewardship—what we do with our time, our talents, and our treasure—come down to one thing: keeping first things first. If we wait until Sunday morning to gauge our energy level after a busy week, most of us won't have anything left in the tank. Church will become an "option" we can skip to catch up on other good things: family time, sports, rest, or the news. But when we make church attendance our *first* priority by remembering that Sunday (or, as the case may be, Saturday night) is the *first* day of the week, then we can gauge our energy levels and make our choices about soccer and dance and football and all the rest with what is left of our week *after* we make time for God.

It's a mindset. It is about repentance in the Biblical sense of that word, a change of heart and mind that allows us to turn (and re-turn) to God. We give out of gratitude, that we have been called to share in something larger than ourselves, to participate with Jesus Christ in the larger mission of the Church, not just when we are feeling settled and secure, but even more so when we feel vulnerable and uncertain. We give not because the Church needs our money, but because it is *the* spiritual practice that cultivates an attitude of gratitude: transforming us from people who see scarcity into people who count our blessings. We give because it draws us closer to the love of God. I pray that we are on that journey together, even in uncertain times.

Peace in Christ,

Rich

Don't forget!!!! Daylight savings ends this weekend. Set your clocks back 1 hour.
Report from Delegates to Diocesan Convention

This year's diocesan convention included discussion of a document entitled *The Anglican Way: Signposts on a Common Journey*. See: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/signposts/english.cfm> for further information on this important document.) Bishop Korfu and his wife from the Diocese of Kumasi were also our guests at Convention this year--along with "The Three Cantors" as our chaplains. (The cantors are all priests in the Anglican Church of Canada.) The presence of these global friends and the document helped us to remember that in spite of what one may read in the newspapers, we are still part of a global communion.

Closer to home, we passed a diocesan budget with an overall increase of 1%--recognizing the challenges we face economically across the diocese. In addition, an update on Bement Camp was offered and the financial challenges we face in moving forward there were explored. (If Bement is going to continue to function the diocese would be looking at an investment of several million dollars in the very near future.) There will be a diocesan forum at Bement on Saturday, November 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. A Working lunch will be provided. If you are interested in attending please RSVP by calling Sue O'Hare at 1-800-332-8513 Ext. 10 or send an email to summit@bementcenter.com with your name and email address. Visit www.diocesewma.org click on Bement tab for more info.

As always, Convention included a chance to connect with old friends like former Associates, The Rev. Mark Hatch, and The Rev. Darrell Huddleston (and Bunny). In addition, we offered our UTO gift (\$400) at the Convention Eucharist.

Our bishop spoke about the challenges of discipleship in difficult times; his annual address can be read at <http://www.diocesewma.org/>

Sincerely,

Your delegates: Rich Simpson, Jill Williams, Peter Caswell, David Simmons, Dawn Rooke

Acolyte Training ~ Sunday, November 9th



The Rev. Jill Williams will lead a required training for all current acolytes and anyone interested in joining the acolyte ministry on Sunday, November 9th after the 10 a.m. service.

New acolytes should be at least in the fifth grade.

Jill will lead us through some of the changes that have been made since the altar was rearranged, and will give us a chance to "spruce up" for the upcoming holiday services.

We'll meet from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Pizza will be served for lunch.

Want to sign up to be an acolyte or have questions? Call Nancy Olesin, acolyte coordinator, at 978-464-2780.



The Youth Groups will be participating in a nationwide 30-hour famine on November 22-23, 2008, sponsored by World Vision. They will spend the day and overnight at the church, and raising money for world hunger relief. This is their 8th year fasting for hunger and to date have raised \$13,000! Please support them with your prayers and by sponsoring a youth, if possible. Speak to one of the youth group members or to Lori Churchill or Jill Williams. Thank you for helping them make a difference.

Church School Food Collection

On the weekend of November 22/23 we will collect food for the Wachusett Food Pantry. Donations can be left in the baskets in the narthex. However, children are asked to bring their donations to church school so they can present them at the altar during the Offertory. Drivers will be needed on Sunday, November 23rd after the 10:00 a.m. service to transport food to First Baptist Church.



Each week at “circle time” (just before the children come into the worship service) children have the chance to contribute to a children’s offering. Offerings usually come in the form of loose coins or folded dollar bills and so, in order to help make their offerings a bit more manageable for them, envelopes are provided. Children are certainly NOT expected to make a pledge for the year!

Each week, a different class is asked to help lead circle time on Sundays. Volunteers are selected to collect the offering and help to lead the group in prayer. The offering is brought to the altar by one of the children (usually the first to arrive in the leading class that day). It is kept separate from the offering collected by the ushers and it goes to an account that is used for Church School mission projects. One fairly long-standing outreach program for us is the purchase of shares of animals at the Living Gift Market. A large donation is made to Heifer International from the children’s account, and each student is given a “voucher” with which they can buy a share of an animal -- a nice teacher gift for the holiday season! We have also participated in other child-centered programs such as purchasing school supplies for needy children.

We would encourage each family to talk about participation in the children’s offering. Is there a chore your child can do or a small sacrifice they can make to earn the money they give? Although the children do not get to see their nickels, dimes, etc. at work each week, they will have the opportunity to do so throughout the year. We would like all children to feel that they have contributed to our group projects – whatever their donation might be!

The Christian Formation Committee

**2009 Annual Pledge Kick Off November 8/9
In-Gathering November 22/23**

Each year vestry is asked to make their pledge commitments before the congregation does. As a group these leaders represent an average pledge of \$3,358, an increase of 8% over last year's giving. Now it is the congregation's turn to pledge. Pledge packets will be available after services on November 8/9 and In-gathering is November 22/23, the weekend before Thanksgiving. As you prepare your families and homes for this time of giving thanks, please prayerfully reflect upon your financial commitment to St. Francis in the year ahead.

For the Stewardship Committee,
Laura Caswell



...Notes from your Mission Team

Committee Members: We're meeting on Wednesday, November 5th after the 7:00 p.m. Eucharist.

At this writing the detailed results from the Crop Walk are not yet in, but we had a beautiful day and a great effort chaired by Kathy Diehl and Mary Jude Pigsley. Thanks to both of them.

Thanks to Donna Alarie and all her volunteers who worked on this year's Church Mouse Fair. After expenses it looks like we will have raised nearly \$3,000.

Thanks to Beverly Giarusso for coordinating the United Thank Offering and all who contributed. \$400 was presented at the Diocesan Convention on behalf of St. Francis.

Save the date: The Heifer International Living Gift Market is scheduled for Sunday, December 7 in the parish hall. This event is a great opportunity to learn about the good work that Heifer International does around the world and to do your Christmas shopping for those folks who always seem to have everything they need.

For the Mission Team ~ Jim Bourque, Chairperson 508-829-9275 jbouque66@verizon.net



Prayer shawl Ministry

Thank you ladies for all your hard work and contributions to this ministry.

PS4FS Ministry

The latest update we have is 1,855 shawls have now been mailed out to families. This, I feel, is quite remarkable. The total number of groups/individuals now involved has reached 196. Outstanding.

I will be attending a meeting in South Yarmouth on Saturday, October 18. Also, I will be at the "Threefold Blessings" gathering on November 1 in Hartford, Ct.

My notes from these two important meetings will be in the next Little Portion.

Beryl Turner



To Our Friends at St. Francis

We want to thank everyone for your support and prayers during and after Jim's recent surgery. We appreciate the time Rich and Jill spent with us. It looks like a complete recovery sometime over the next few months.

..."it was kind of you to share the burden of my troubles." (Philippians 4:14)

Gail and Jim Bourque

New Website!!!!

Many thanks to Cynthia McIntyre, Hathy Simpson and Laura Caswell for all their work in getting the new website up and running.

Please visit our new website at <http://www.stfrancisholden.org>.

Bible 101-B: Four Witnesses — A Critical Introduction to the Four Gospels (Led by the Rector)

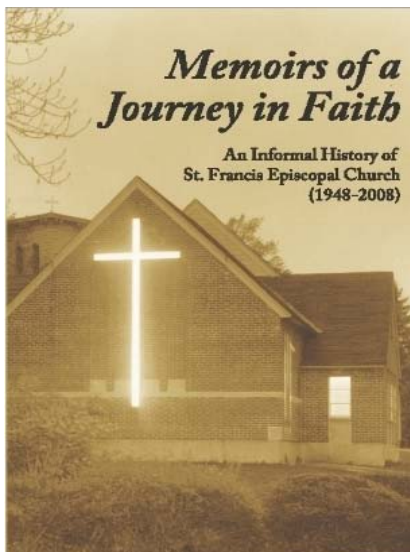


This four-week class will meet at St. Clare House on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 to 3 p.m. from November 9 through November 30. This is both for beginners and those who wish to make a new beginning. While it is impossible to cover all four gospels thoroughly in four weeks, the goal in this study is to see how the four

gospel writers portray Jesus of Nazareth in different ways, based on their theological perspectives. Rather than trying to "homogenize" these gospels we'll celebrate their differences.

- November 9: Mark's "Rebel"
- November 16: Matthew's "Second Moses"
- November 23: Luke's "Merciful Savior"
- November 30: John's "Incarnate Word"

Historical Reflection Night ~ Wednesday, November 19 after the 7:00 p.m. service



Place your order now!! Please see the sign up sheet on the table in the narthex. Cost is \$10.00

Shortly after Rich Simpson arrived in Holden in February 1998 as the fifth rector of St. Francis Church, we embarked on a process of discernment to ask three questions:

- (1) Where have we been?
- (2) Where are we?
- (3) Where is God calling us next?

What emerged from that process was a new mission statement and some concrete goals that helped to chart our course for the next decade. We are now at a juncture after a recent capital campaign and completing work on our worship space and the memorial garden of wanting to enter into a similar process once more, knowing that the parish has changed a great deal over the course of the past decade.

That process will begin on Wednesday, November 19 at the 7 p.m. Eucharist and then following that service with a conversation that will feature Alice Carr, who has recently published a memoir of her sixty years at St. Francis.

This event is for all in the parish: from founding members to brand new people who want to learn more about where we have been as a community over the past six decades in Holden. It is for youth as well as adult members — a time for sharing stories and memories. We hope you will join us.

The deadline for the next Little Portion is Thursday, November 20th

Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net.

The Little Portion will be mailed on Tuesday, November 25th.

Join us for our Annual Thanksgiving Eve Potluck Supper.

Thanksgiving Eve

We will begin at 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Watch for the sign-up sheet in the narthex.



Holy Eucharist will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the church.

Online Advent Meditations

Members of the St. Francis Community will be offering short (300 words or so) meditations on the daily office readings for each day in Advent. If you would like to receive these devotions by email, please send an email from your preferred email address to the rector at stfrancis_rector@charter.net to sign up. You might also want to pass this information along to college students and others who are far and wide who might be interested. Advent begins this year on Sunday, November 30.

Christmas Pageants

New this year!!

Christmas Eve Services with pageants will be presented at 3:00 p.m. and again at 4:30 p.m.

Sign-up sheets with rehearsal times for both services are on the table in the narthex. If you have any questions please speak to Jill.



*Newcomer's
Get-together*



Friday evening, December 5th

St. Clare House

7:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Diehl at kdiehl@charter.net or Linda Letourneau at lrrkelly@aol.com.



Christmas Party

Monday, December 8th at 6:00 p.m.

Punch, snacks, games, and a visit from Santa!

Please sign up on the sheet in the narthex.

This will be the last Clown Alley Christmas Party at St. Francis. Please plan to come and join the fun one last time.

Help at H.O.M.E.

The following comes from a flyer recently put together by Help at H.O.M.E. (Holden Outreach Managing Emergencies) a task force the rector serves on. As Christians we engage in these practices not only to save money, but as good stewards of God's gifts and caretakers of the environment. All of us can take action today to reduce energy use at home while staying comfortable.

Year Round Energy Saving Tips:

- Repair broken or cracked glass and putty older windows. Install exterior storm windows, including cellar storm windows. Weather-strip windows, doors and attic accesses.
- Make sure doors close properly.
- If you have a fireplace, be sure it's fitted with a tight sealing damper.
- Calk foundation cracks and openings; sealing these air leaks can save up to 10% in heating and cooling costs. A caulking gun is one way to weather-strip your house.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient fluorescent lights.
- Install low flow showerheads and faucet aerators. Take shorter showers.
- Reduce hot water heater temperature to 120° and you can save about 13% in water heating costs.
- Consider using cold water for laundry and other household tasks.
- Repair leaking hot water faucets, tanks, and pipes.
- Install automatic setback thermostats that adjust the temperature to fit your schedule.
- Replace standard curtains with tight sealing, insulated or quilted window coverings.

Dear Father Simpson and the Vestry of St. Francis Church:

May grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Diocesan Council asked me to express Council's appreciation to you for encouraging and inspiring us by your accepting a higher amount for the 2008 Assessment for Common Ministry.

At nearly every meeting Council reviews the status of all the congregations. One measure taken into account is how the congregations are relative to their assessments for common ministry. Much of Council's time is spent considering ways to encourage and support congregations which fall behind. The Council responds with visits to listen and help the congregations' leaders develop action plans with a healthy mission focus.

Your example as a congregation that has kept current on your assessment, and your leadership as a congregation that accepted an assessment higher than the formula has encouraged Council members in this work. You helped us sustain an appreciation of the abundance of God's grace, which helped us approach struggling congregations with a positive helpful spirit.

Thank you for helping the Diocese live out its vision that we are becoming evermore recognizable as the Body of Christ, utterly dependent on God, fully gifted by the Holy Spirit, joyously living Christ's Great Commandments and Great Commission in Western Massachusetts and the world.

Peace and all good,
The Rev. Rick Bellows
Member of Diocesan Council