

E-Portion
August 30, 2006

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Fall Schedule begins the weekend of September 2/3.

Saturday at 5:00 pm and Sunday at 8:00 and 10:00 am. The Wednesday 7:00 pm Eucharist services begin on September 6.

Office hours will return to Monday—Thursday, 8:00 am—3:00 pm. All announcements for Sunday bulletins should be received in the office by Wednesday morning.

The next Little Portion deadline is Thursday, September 21st.

Save the date.....

Sunday, October 1, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.

Blessing of the Animals at St. Francis

Please note the change in time.

Thanks from the Huddlestons

St. Francis Friends:

Darrell and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your outpouring of prayers and cards on the death of my mother, Helen Markel. There is no question but that they comforted and sustained us. Blessings on all of you for your compassion and love.

Bunny and Darrell Huddleston

Rector's Column

Lex orandi, lex credendi. (Literally: “the law of prayer is the law of belief.”)

It has been said that if you want to know what we Episcopalians believe, then the thing to do is to come and pray with us a while. Our theology grows out of our common prayer, which is centered on the weekly celebration of Holy Eucharist. This way of prayer embodies hospitality by welcoming all the baptized to the Table—regardless of whether or not all are in agreement on doctrinal questions. This way of prayer is constantly shaping the content of what we believe. This is not a new idea: from the very first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, Archbishop Cranmer and others were committed to gathering the community by offering a dynamic “middle way” between catholic and reformed.

But our Eucharistic liturgy is not only about *gathering* the baptized community but *sending* that community into the world to do the work that God has given us to do. Our work includes building up the Church but is not limited to that alone. (*The Church is not an end in itself but a means to an end: the end is to help people to be disciples of Jesus Christ who bear witness to the power of the resurrection in the world.*)

So each fall we commission vestry members and church musicians and church school teachers and ushers and acolytes and altar guild to help build up the Church—to strengthen it where it is right and to direct it where it is in error. When we proclaim each week on the top of our bulletins that the ministers of St. Francis Church are “all the people,” we are saying that the Church has a calling to be a light to the nations and salt of the earth. As parents and friends, as people

in the marketplace and in schools, as citizens of this Commonwealth and nation and planet we are ambassadors of Christ's reconciling love—for the sake of the world.

Lex orandi, lex credendi. It is simply to say that our prayer lives—both corporate and personal—shape what we believe and how we act in the world. As we celebrate this Labor Day weekend (and embark on a new “academic” year together), I commend to you the prayers on pages 256-260 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. These prayers deal with the ministry of all the baptized; not only the clergy but “all Christians in their vocation.” If you look them up (and I hope you will!) you'll discover that these prayers focus on the Mission of the Church—which is not ultimately about taking care of institutional needs but about the redeeming work of Jesus Christ in the world. And so we pray for the nation and for peace and justice; for fruitful seasons and for commerce and industry. We pray that we might be faithful stewards of God's good gifts. We pray for the sick and for educators and for vocation in daily work. Finally, this section of collects concludes with a prayer specifically written for Labor Day—which reminds us among other things that God has “so linked our lives with one another that all we do affects, for good or ill, all other lives.”

Lex orandi, lex credendi. May our Labor Day prayers shape our witness in the world—our actions in daily life—so that people might see and know that we are Christians by our love.

In Christ's love,
Rich

Storm Damage Update

Anyone who was in Holden on Wednesday, August 2 witnessed the power of wind as a violent storm moved through town. The damage at St. Francis included two trees that fell on our church property, one of them on the power line into the church. (No one had a better view of all this than our Minister of Music, Charles Nwachuku, who was giving piano lessons at the time!) We were very fortunate that no one was hurt and the work that needed to be done was related strictly to property and stewardship of the property.

The insurance companies refer to such events as “acts of God.” That is bad theology. These are acts of nature. The work of God is what follows, as God's people spring into action. I set up a task group that stayed in touch with updates via email: the two wardens, Bryan Diehl (our Property Chairperson), Darrell Huddleston, and Craig Stanovich (a member of the vestry and a person whose work is in insurance.)

Maryann Dipinto, another vestry member, asked Carlson Tree Removal to cut the tree in the back of the church (by the Memorial Garden) away from the power line. She then marked the area with orange tape. Bryan and Doug Turner contacted an electrician who worked with the town to restore power in a very timely manner. Craig Miller, a relatively new parishioner, cut up the tree and removed it. Craig Stanovich and Chris Berglund have been working with the insurance company. As for the huge tree on Phillips Road, Bryan pursued the town to pay for removal of “their” tree on the front lawn of “our” property—and they did. We are so blessed to have people willing to roll up their sleeves and get things done; thanks to all.

RMS

Proverbial Truth

The Book of Proverbs tends to be neglected by the lectionary and by modern preachers. During the month of September, however, readings from the Book of Proverbs pop up three weeks in a row, beginning on September 10. These readings come from the 22nd, 1st, and 31st chapters of Proverbs. The Rector will preach a mini-series on these texts during the month of September. Members of the congregation can better prepare themselves to hear God's Word by taking some time to read through at least these three chapters, and perhaps the whole book of Proverbs sometime this month.

The Hebrew Bible is organized into three main areas: law/torah, prophets, and writings. The writings are the most diverse section—a kind of catch-all category that includes thirteen books, among them Psalms, the Wisdom writings (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes), Lamentations, and Esther.

Wisdom is personified in Proverbs as female—which may come as a surprise to some who perhaps feel they know the Bible well, but have not been exposed to these parts of the Bible before. In Hebrew the root word is *hokma*. This is not about intellect or abstract thought so much as common sense—or better still, “street smarts.” It's the stuff we observe about life. It can at times sound like cliché, but we do well to remember that cliché is first based on the way things work—at least most of the time. It is written by teachers/sages for their students (young men) to orient them to the world. It's akin to teaching our kids to look both ways before they cross the street or teaching them “red sky at night/sailors delight; red sky at morning/sailors take warning.”

This kind of wisdom isn't dogmatic. It's about moral instruction and discipline, piety and order. It's inclusive, and in fact much of Proverbs sounds like Confucian thought and has an “eastern flavor.” One example, from another piece of

Wisdom literature—the Book of Ecclesiastes: “Cast your bread upon the waters, and after many days you will get it back.” (Ecc. 11:1) Notice that the proverb encourages generosity, but not in the form of the prophets (who say things like “thus saith the Lord...”) Notice that the proverb doesn’t insist that this is a *commandment* from God; only that it’s how the world works. It suggests that “what goes around comes around” and that “one reaps what one sows.” It grows out of a sense of how the world works. You can debate it with your neighbor regardless of whether or not they happen to believe Jesus is the Son of God, or whether or not they believe in the Trinity.

Proverbs doesn’t incorporate the whole of Christian faith, but it is a part of the canon of Scripture—a too often neglected place where we are invited to listen for “a Word of the Lord.” We’ll do just that for three weeks in September.

Adult Education Offering ~

Job and the Life of Faith—Wisdom for Today’s World

In a sense, most of us have probably known Job at some point in our lives. We use the expression in common parlance, as in “my goodness she sure has the life of Job,” to refer to a good person who has had more than their fair share of loss.

All of us face loss in our lives: from those early teen breakups of first love or the death of a pet to the loss of a job, or life-partner, or child. But as Billy Joel once sang, “only the good die young.” That may not always hold true. But there are times when our ability to trust in the moral fabric of the universe as “fair” is torn asunder--because life is not always fair and sometimes it does seem as if the unjust go unpunished and the innocent suffer unjustly.

These are the kinds of questions Job raises. And even when we grasp full well the problem--perhaps because we, ourselves, have felt like Job--the answers to the questions Job raises remain ever elusive to us. Where is God in the midst of human suffering? Why doesn't God intervene and at least level the playing field? What constitutes being a faithful friend in the midst of such loss?

We will have an opportunity to explore these and other questions as we embark on a seven week journey with Job, using a new Kerygma study as our guide along the way. We'll gather on Thursday nights at 7:30 p.m. at St. Clare House, beginning September 14. Please consider joining us, even if you've never before come to a Bible study. A sign-up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

Coming in Advent.....

Outrageous Women in the Bible, Part 1 ~ An Exploration of Matthew 1

Tuesdays, November 28, December 5, 12, 19—7:30 pm at St. Clare House.

- A. Tamar (Matthew 1:2) - Genesis 38
- B. Rahab (Matthew 1:5a) - Joshua 2:1-21, 6:22-25
- C. Ruth (Matthew 1:5b) - Ruth 2-4
- D. “The Wife of Uriah” (Matthew 1:6) - 2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Kings 15:5

Music Ministry Choir rehearsals will resume on Thursday, September 7th, from 7:00 – 9:00 pm in the choir room. Additional rehearsal will be on Sunday mornings from 8:45 – 9:30 am. If you are interested in joining us this Fall please contact Charles Nwachukwu at 508-868-4367 or email him at cnwac74@hotmail.com.

Church School ~ The Church School program is available for children who are in preschool (age 3 by September 1st) through grade 6. Classes will begin with “Move Up” parties on the weekend of Sept. 9th and 10th. Children should arrive 15 minutes before the 5:00 PM or 10:00 AM services and join their classes in the following rooms:

- Saturday preschool to 2nd grade: Upstairs Faith Room
- Saturday 3rd through 6th grade: Upstairs Hope Room
- Sunday Preschool/Kindergarten: Upstairs Faith Room
- Sunday 1st/2nd grade: Upstairs Hope Room
- Sunday 3rd/4th grade: Upstairs Charity Room
- Sunday 5th grade: *St. Clare House
- Sunday 6th grade: *St. Clare House

Registration begins on August 26th. **Forms need to be completed on all students**, even if they are not new to the program, since these forms are given to the child’s teachers. If you have any questions about this program, please contact the Church School Coordinator, Susan Bastardo, at (508) 829-0600 or SMBslp22@hotmail.com.

Fall Start Up Schedule:

- Aug. 26/27: Registration begins
- Sept. 2/3: Last “VeggieTales” Theater program (Ages 3-8 in nursery)

Sept. 9/10: Church School Move-Up Day

Sept. 16/17: Classes begin

* The St. Clare house is the small blue house at the end of the parking lot.

Confirmation

We are in the process of compiling the names for the Confirmation Class of 2006-2007. Those going into the tenth grade or older are eligible. If you are interested and have not received a mailing, please contact the church office. If you have received the mailing and have not yet returned your information sheet, please return it to the office as soon as possible.

An informational meeting with Parents and Potential Confirmands will be Sunday, September 17th, at 11:30 am in the Library.

Commissioning of Confirmands and Mentors will be Wednesday, October 4, at 7:00 p. m. followed by a Class Meeting with Mentors and Confirmands in the library.

Youth Group

Youth Group is scheduled to start on Sunday, Sept. 10th. 7th-8th graders meet 4:00-5:30 and 9th-12th graders meet 6:30-8:30 each Sunday night. On Sept. 10th I will also be meeting with parents at 5:30 to share information about the year and answer any questions. I have sent a mailing to all the teens on my list which includes info about the year. If you haven't received this because you are somehow not on my list or know of a teen who might be interested in youth group, please let me know (I can be reached at the church or via email lchurchill@mac.com). I'm looking forward to a great year - hope to see you there!

Peace,
Lori Churchill

Senior Fellowship

Sunday, September 17th, 2:00—4:00 pm. Come enjoy an afternoon concert given by Charles Nwachukwu and Luis Gliando, to be followed by tea and baked treats!

Mission Matters

" We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. That helps us put our whole heart and soul into doing it. The dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved - they are Jesus in disguise." Mother Teresa

DESTINATION LIBERIA

Our shipment of health, school, sewing and liturgical items has been collected, inventoried, boxed, labeled, loaded on the truck, and paid for thanks to all of YOU!!!! Our two large boxes were sent to a local collection point where it will finally be loaded on a ship bound for Liberia. Once in Liberia, it will be distributed for local mission programs.

THANKS BE TO GOD!!!

MISSION TEAM MEETING will be held on Monday, Sept. 11 at 7:30PM at the church. Please join us.

WACHUSETT FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

Thank you for your many donations of food items for the Pantry this summer. Please keep in mind that food is needed through the entire year. (The Collection Bucket is found by the Mission Table in the Church narthex.) Volunteers are always needed to help sort food every Friday morning. For more information call the Pantry number at 508-829-2749 or email wfp@wfp1995.org.

Thank you also to those who carted all our donations to the Pantry every week!!!!

UPCOMING MISSION EVENTS

October 15 Crop Walk
21 Church Mouse Fair
November Gifts of the Heart Collection
December Heifer Living Gift Market

SEPTEMBER IS UNITED THANK OFFERING MONTH

THE UNITED THANK OFFERING (UTO) IS A PERSONAL AND FAMILY DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH. IT'S MISSION IS TO EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF THANKFUL PEOPLE BY ENCOURAGING PRAYERS, OFFERINGS AND AWARENESS OF THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS. IT IS A WAY FOR EACH OF US TO EXPRESS TANGIBLE THANKS TO GOD. UNITED WITH PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS OF ALL EPISCOPALIANS, ITS MINISTRY REACHES AROUND THE WORLD.

THE POWER OF THE UTO BOX IS UNLIMITED. YOUR PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS HAVE BUILT CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS, FED THE HUNGRY, CLOTHED THE POOR, PROVIDED SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS IN OUR DIOCESE AND BEYOND. REGULAR, INTENTIONAL THANKSGIVING CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE AS WELL AS IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE YOUR OFFERING.

OUR INGATHERING WILL TAKE PLACE THIS FALL. MEANWHILE UTO BOXES CAN BE FOUND ON THE MISSION TABLE IN THE NARTHEX. THANKS TO BEV GIARUSSO, UTO CHAIR.

REMEMBER.....THE SIZE OF YOUR GIFT IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE PRACTICE OF GIVING THANKS.

Jeanne Schutte for the Mission Team

Bunny Huddleston, Chairperson, 508-886-4969 or darrellbunny@masn.com

Prayer Shawl Ministry ~ A group of us meet every third Monday of each month at 10 a.m. Please feel free to come join us. Thought you'd be interested in a few snippets from Thank You notes we have received: "I was touched to receive one of your prayer shawls", "Our hearts are truly touched by the prayer bear we received", "I can't express to you enough thanks for your extremely kind gift of the "healing shawl". Thank you to everyone who helps us with this Ministry.

Tidbits from the Church Mouse

It is with "great thanks" that the Church Mice welcomed some new and very talented "Mice" into the "Cheese-Patch" during the summer months!

You will be able to see their creations very soon at the Church Mouse Fair on Saturday, October 21st!!

A wall-hanging in one "Mouse House" reads: "What Wisdom Can You Find That is Greater Than Kindness" ~ With that thought in mind, a small, happy, and faithful group of "Church Mice" have gathered each week to work and plan for the success of The Church Mouse Fair. Your presence will always be welcomed within this group that meets on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am. The "Church Mice" have, for many years, allocated all proceeds from the Fair toward feeding the hungry in Worcester County and Beyond...in addition to providing monthly dinners at the "Mustard Seed" in Worcester. "As often as you did it to one of the least of My brothers and sisters, you did it to Me. [Matthew 25-40.]

Here are some ways in which "your kindness" can be offered: ATTIC TREASURES ROOM...all kinds of "collectibles" and appliances, (that are in good working order) household items, curtains, drapes, bedding, bathroom accessories, china/dinnerware, that are clean and in good condition will find a new home. [Please note: we cannot accept hard-covered books, tires, bicycles, television sets, or computers because of recycling regulations.] CRAFTS TABLES...filled with all kinds of decorating and gift-giving possibilities for Fall, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, will welcome contributions from "home crafters" who wish to share their "creations." CHILDREN'S ROOM...will gratefully welcome good, clean, used or new toys, books, games and baby items that meet current safety requirements. THE BOOK ROOM is always a popular place! [Please note: paper-back books only, please...due to current recycling regulations, we cannot accept subscription magazines, hard-covered books, textbooks or encyclopedias. THE JEWELRY TABLE will gladly accept the new and/or used jewelry, in good condition, that you no longer wish to keep. THE BAKERY TABLES are always extremely popular...but, only because YOU make them so, with your delicious baked goods. PLANT TABLES will look great with your contribution of plants and dried arrangements. Our wonderful and dedicated YOUTH GROUPS of St. Francis Church will, again, be staffing "THE CHURCH MOUSE CAFÉ."

If you would like to volunteer to help "before," "during," or "after" the FAIR, your kindness will be most welcomed and deeply appreciated. Sign up sheets will be appearing in a few weeks. Because of limited space, please wait until the week of October 15th to bring your donated items to the Church. THANK YOU! Please call Barbara Beck at 508-829-3045 or Jeanne Schutte at 508-853-6516 if you'd like more information.