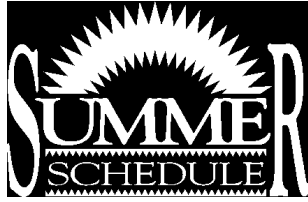


E-Portion – July/August 2008



Worship:

From July 6th to August 31st services of Holy Eucharist will be celebrated on Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. and Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Choir:

Lend us your voice! Join the choir this summer for just one week, or several weeks. The “summer choir” will practice on Sunday mornings at 8:00 a.m. Come and join us for music and fellowship. Questions? See a choir member.

Church School:

Children’s Worship bulletins and crayons are available each week at the door. We also offer “Good News Theatre” each week. Children up to eight years of age are welcome to go to the nursery on Sunday mornings to watch a video. Parents may get their children for the Eucharist, or children may stay in the nursery until the end of the service.

Church Softball League:

Anyone 16 or older interested in playing on the St. Francis team will find information on the table in the narthex. Games are played on Sundays at 5:00 p.m. at Davis Hill and Mt. View Middle School.

Office: The office will be closed the week of July 7—11.

From July 14 through August 21st the parish office will be open Monday through Wednesday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

From the Rector

Top Ten List: Some Things I Learned on Sabbatical

10. *It’s really nice to have some weekends off.* Obviously one non-negotiable for parish priests is that you work on the weekends. (Some people think clergy *only* work on the weekends!) At St. Francis that isn’t just on Sundays but Saturday afternoons as well. During my sabbatical, though, I had ample opportunities to go away—often with my family—from a Friday afternoon to a Sunday night. It gave us a chance to spend time with extended family in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Vermont. We also took numerous college trips with Graham and I got to be a “tag-along-spouse” at a conference Hathy attended in Chicago. More than anything else this time allowed sabbatical to be a gift not only to me as the rector but a special time for my entire family.

9. *Considering the lilies of the field is easier to do when you are moving at a slower pace.* My life is very good, but as for many of you it is the *pace* of life that gets out of control. That isn’t only about work, but also about family life: we have two very involved teenagers in our home. When my children were much younger I always said they were the best spiritual directors I could have, because taking hold of the hand of a two-year old and going for a walk in the park you see all kinds of things you don’t normally see when you have a specific destination in mind. While on sabbatical I had a chance to spend some quiet time with my friends at the Society of St. John the Evangelist. But even more importantly, while in Holden I walked to places like the library and post office (rather than making them stops along the way to someplace else.) It made a big difference in my ability to notice and to consider the world around me—and to notice that God is very much in our midst.

8. *I learned some things about Islam.* One of the few structured “academic” things I did during my time away was to attend a conference on Christian-Muslim dialogue at Georgetown University in June for clergy and imams. More about my learnings in the September issue of *The Little Portion*, when we commemorate the seventh anniversary of 9/11.

7. *I love trains!* This is related to numbers 8 and 9 above. The great advantage of not being rushed to get from point “a” to point “b” is that when it came time to head south to Washington, DC for my conference on Christianity and Islam, I didn’t want to drive or fly; so I took Amtrak. As far as I’m concerned, it’s the only way to travel!

6. *It’s not just a cliché: mind, body, and spirit really are profoundly connected.* I usually do pretty well keeping my mind active and with my prayers, but I made a commitment while on sabbatical to spend more time at the YMCA getting some exercise during my sabbatical. I was in fact able to spend, on average, about ten hours a week there. I lost a few pounds (although not as many as I might have liked!), I had more energy during the days, and I slept better at night. I am determined to tend to my physical health and to maintain a regimen of exercise as things return to the more hectic pace of life in September.

5. *I spent a day trying to keep up with my State Representative on Beacon Hill.* (Thanks, Lew!) I feel strongly that Christians are called to live their faith *in the world*, and that must include our political decision-making. We cannot and should not compartmentalize our religious faith as something separate from how we vote. We will not all agree in any given election cycle about what the primary issues are (or should be) or which candidates best reflect our core religious values. But it does seem to me that one area where we might begin to find common ground is in our commitment to move beyond the narrow scope of self-interest (is this policy good *for me*?) in order to ask questions related to neighborly love—is this good *for us*? Or in the old language: does it strengthen our *commonwealth*? In our day I would submit that this is rather counter-cultural. Whether we see ourselves on the right, or on the left, or in the middle we tend to forget that the core of our faith is about servanthood and our politics should reflect that.

4. *I did some writing for a new ecumenical resource for preachers called Feasting on the Word that is being published by John Knox Press beginning this summer.* David Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor will be the General Editors for this new twelve-volume series that will offer four different perspectives on each of the four readings appointed in the Revised Common Lectionary for each week in the church year. Barbara was one of my teachers at Columbia Theological Seminary (where I did my doctorate) and one of my two advisors on the final dissertation. She invited me to offer homiletical reflections on several psalms for Volume Four, Year B (which will be released next spring) and on the first three chapters of I Corinthians for Volume One, Year A (which will be released in July 2010.)

3. *Worship looks and feels different from the pews.* I did not take a sabbatical from Church; only from my responsibilities in *leading* worship. And I realized that it is kind of nice after more than twenty years of being “up front” to worship God without the responsibilities of coordinating that worship (at least for a short time!) One of the highlights was being in my home congregation, the Hawley United Methodist Church, to celebrate Pentecost. (It was also Mother’s Day and Confirmation, so I got to see my niece confirmed and work in the kitchen with an old friend preparing a Mother’s Day Lunch.) It is just amazing what goes on in the back of the church, in the hallways, and in the kitchen during a long liturgical celebration! Who knew?

2. *St. Francis Church is truly blessed to have the Rev. Jill Williams as our curate, and Chris Berglund and Laura Caswell as our wardens.* In fact we are blessed with a wonderful staff and strong lay leadership at every level. But I am especially grateful for the ministries of Jill, Chris, and Laura, without whom a break like the one I have taken this spring would simply not have been possible.

1. *There is no place like home—and St. Francis is my home.* I really do feel a bit like Dorothy coming back from Oz: I have had wonderful adventures during my time away, but I am grateful to be the rector of St. Francis Church and renewed and refreshed to face the challenges and opportunities that this fall will set before us. I trust that (with God’s help) I return to you more healthy in body, mind and spirit, and eager to see what God has in store for us next.

In Christ,
Rich

In the last issue of *The Little Portion* it was noted that the vestry is reading *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith* by Diana Butler Bass. In the spirit of the "One Book, One Town" reading program that some communities do, and as we prepare this fall for a process of re-visioning, we might consider "One Book, One Parish" and using this book as a starting point for our conversations together. Below is a quote about how there are no maps on how to be the church in the uncharted territory we find ourselves in but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

"Maps are about seeing from above, about perspective from a god's eye view, about getting to a destination by avoiding the pain. Christianity is not a map religion. Christianity is a religion of the streets, of signposts on the ground, of people walking along the way...Christianity is a kind of vast spiritual and historical migration, a mobile city of pilgrims, all on their way to a country where there are no maps [but] there are signposts to point Christians in the right direction, toward the wisdom of God, toward love, toward home. Things like hospitality, contemplation, healing, testimony, and justice. Christians call these signposts 'practices,' the activities drawn from our tradition that we do together in community. Practices form Christians in faith as they deepen their trust in God's love and strengthen their love for the world. From the earliest days of the Christian faith, Jesus' followers, known as people of the Way, were recognized by what they did--practicing hospitality and forgiveness." (pg. 74)

Moses

The lectionary is a three-year plan for reading the Bible in worship. The Episcopal Church now uses the Revised Common Lectionary, an ecumenical resource also used by Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, the United Church of Christ and others. Beginning August 24 and continuing through October 26, the Old Testament readings we will be hearing will come from the Book of Exodus, where the central figure is Moses. (The final reading, on October 26, will actually come from the Book of Deuteronomy--recounting the end of Moses' life.) We will hear about how a new pharaoh arose in Egypt who oppressed the Hebrews; how Moses was saved by a conspiracy of women; about Moses' encounter with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the burning bush; about the giving of Torah; about the challenges of becoming a free people and the conflicts that ensued between Moses and God and God's people as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. Most of the preaching this fall will focus on these Old Testament readings, and you are invited to spend some time in your own devotions with this important text. For younger children (and the young at heart) it might be worth a trip to the video store to rent *The Prince of Egypt!*

Summer Pledges

Thanks to all who have kept their pledge payments current. Since summer is a time when many of us go on vacation and our schedules are often a bit more relaxed, we'd appreciate it if you could get your payments in early, especially if you are going away.

Statements will be mailed in early July. If you have any questions, let me know.

Happy Summer!
Ginny Brink, Bookkeeper

Refresh Renew Rejoice!

The plans for the renovation of the Memorial Garden was presented in open meetings for the parish after all services on the weekend of May 31-June 1. The vestry has approved a contract with Busy Bee Nursery and the work is expected to begin in early July.

In addition to the Capital Campaign pledges already received from the parish we have received \$6,535 in funds and pledges from families and friends designated to the garden renovation.

We are blessed by the generosity of all who have contributed to the Capital Campaign but we still have another \$20,000 to go before reaching our goal. With the pledges and contributions in hand we have completed the renovation of the worship space, established a ministry in El Salvador and made some of the need repairs to church property.

If you have not yet pledged please consider doing so. Pledge forms are on the Narthex table.

Thanks to those who continue to pay their pledges so that our work can continue!

Kathleen O'Connor, Chair
Capital Campaign Committee

Planting Day

In order to save \$5,500 on the cost of the Memorial Garden renovation we will be planting the Vinca groundcover ourselves. We will need many helpers to do this, no matter what color your thumb! When we are sure of the renovation schedule we will announce the date, so get your trowels and gloves ready.

Our Annual Senior Luncheon was held on June 4, 2008. A record number of 50 senior members and their guests enjoyed a special Eucharist followed by a Middle Eastern Feast of ethnic foods of Lebanon, Turkey, Armenia, Afghanistan and Greece. It was wonderful to gather with old friends and make new ones!

Such a lovely event is only possible with the effort of many. Special thanks to Laura Caswell, Dick and Sue Delorme, Kathy Diehl, Suzanne Dupuis, Karen Heath, Cindy Katinas, Chuck and Diane Manero, Kathleen O'Connor, Amy Polletta, Tom Ritacco, Hathy Simpson, Jen Stanovich and the Rev. Jill Williams.

Many of the delicious foods that were served may be found at Lee's Bakery, Ed Hyder's Mediterranean Market, and Bahnan's Market, all in Worcester.

Thanks again to all who participated.

Mission Matters

With the summer comes our annual summer appeal for the Wachusett Food Pantry's list of items of the week. Here is the 2008 edition:

July 6	100% juice-concentrated would be best (not as heavy to carry for seniors)
July 13	Jelly (to start off the summer)
July 20	paper products-toilet paper, paper towel, tissues, napkins, etc.
July 27	coffee or tea
August 3	Macaroni and cheese
August 10	Dessert Mixes
August 17	100% Juice
August 24	cereal
August 31	Jelly (back to school)

Please remember that plastic bottles are so much easier to transport; just leave your contributions in the narthex.

Your generosity has made it possible for St. Francis to make the 2nd payment of its capital campaign tithe to Fundacion Cristosal and its work in the Bajo Lempe region of El Salvador. A check for \$3,000 was sent the 3rd week of June along with an additional \$500 from the Mission Committee budget towards the purchase of a new 4 wheeled vehicle to help negotiate the difficult terrain in that part of the country. The new vehicle will be very useful in the implementation of the program we support. Plans for the next trip continue; discernment sessions were held on June 1 and June 18. The trip is set for February 2009.

The Committee also made contributions in your name to the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund (\$1,000 each for their work in the Myanmar and China natural disasters) Worcester Habitat for Humanity (\$500), Centro Las Americas (\$500), and The Greater Worcester Food Bank (\$500).

Thank you for making all that good work possible.

Church Mouse Fair

THINK OCTOBER 25TH ~ Now doesn't that make you feel cooler?

Please mark your calendar for the CHURCH MOUSE FAIR to be held on OCTOBER 25TH.

In the meantime, please think of the ever-popular Attic Treasures Room if, during the summer, you are thinking of parting with some good/clean household items that you no longer need. If you have some ideas for craft projects ~ or you enjoy crafting at home and wish to donate some of your creations to the Fair, please know that your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

This year's Fair Chairperson is Donna Alarie and she is eager to hear from you if you wish to be involved in any way toward the success of the Church Mouse Fair. Donna says, "Hey, if you're a 'crafty person,' please call or email me with your ideas and talents." She can be reached by at home: 508-886-6031 or cell phone: 508-847-8574 or email: donnachesspals@aol.com.

Please think of what YOU CAN DO to help make the CHURCH MOUSE FAIR OF 2008 A HUGE SUCCESS. THANK YOU!!!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thank you to all who knit and crochet. We received 6 shawls for blessing last month. Keep up the good work.

An update on the PS4FS Ministry. We are truly humming along. In scarcely 8 months we have made 1,235 shawls and accumulated 173 prayer shawl groups. PA is now added on to the list. Rhode Island is next - and so the beat goes on! We do, however, have about 8 States where we are unable (at this time) to locate any knitting groups. If anyone is interested in joining this Grassroots group - please feel free to contact me (Beryl Turner).

Don't forget the next Prayer Shawl Meeting will be Monday, July 21st at 10:00 a.m. in the Narthex.

Call Beryl Turner at 508-829-3223 for more information. Hope to see you there.



Join us for
Vacation Bible School

For children ages 5—12

- Where: St. Francis Episcopal Church
- When: July 28th through August 1
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
An extended day (until 5:00 p.m.) is available for an additional charge.
- Cost: \$50 per child
- Sign up: on the table in the narthex
email the church office at stfran@verizon.net
call the church office at 508-829-3344

Please be sure to give the names and ages of each child along with name of parent or guardian and a contact phone number or email.

For more information please contact Dawn Rooke (508-829-7124) or dtsar39@aol.com.

Many thanks to the Church School teachers who served this past year.

Saturday workshop volunteers: Ann Scannell, Sharlene O'Connor, Elisa and Alex Heinricher, Gail and Jim Bourque, Julie Russell, Dianne Thibeault, Laura Caswell, Alex Nowak, Linda Mercier.

Sunday teachers: Kayla Rayworth, Ann Polletta, Sarah Trafton, Jack Holden, Chelsea Stanovich, Dave Fafard, Chris Fafard, Cindy Boyan, Catie Simmons.

Sunday assistants: Erica Rayworth, Connor Rooke, James Simpson, Kate Apholt, Katie Anderson, Bryan Diehl, Conor Boyan.

I would also like to sincerely thank those who volunteered to help "behind the scenes" with Church School this year! These folks were my life-savers who always responded to the call (or e-mail) to shop, wrap, craft, etc. etc. I just couldn't appreciate their help more! Thank you to:

Amy Chisholm, Andi Deane, Donna Clayfield, Donna Mann, Kim Whamond, Mary Jude Pigsley, Becca Miller AND to Dan Thibeault for making our fabulous puppet stand. Many thanks!!

Susan

Thank you

Dear St. Francis

Thank you very much for the graduation card. I appreciate all that the church has done for me over the years, and will miss the services while I'm at college.

Once again, thank you for the graduation card.

Love,
Jack Holden

Fall 2008 Bible Study

This fall the Rector will lead a twelve-week study on Sunday afternoons open to all who have a desire to deepen their critical understanding of the Biblical narrative. The class will be divided into three sections that will stand independently from each other: Old Testament (six weeks), Gospels (4 weeks) and St. Paul (2 weeks). If you commit to one section the hope is that you try (with God's help) to attend all or at least most of those classes in that section, but because the three components will stand independently from each other, you can do the Gospels but not the Old Testament, or Paul for two weeks even if you haven't done the previous ten. If you just want to tackle Paul in December that is alright as well. The whole "plan" is outlined below so that some might consider this as a twelve-week study, after which you should have a good sense of how the Bible as a whole fits together.

**Bible 101- A: A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (Led by the Rector)
Sunday Afternoons at 1:30 PM**

This six-week class will meet at St. Clare House on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 PM to 3 PM beginning on Sunday, September 21 and continuing through November 2. (We will not meet on Columbus Day weekend.) This is both for beginners and those who wish to make a new beginning. While there is no way to cover the entire Old Testament in six weeks, our goal is to introduce some of the major themes and concepts by exploring particular texts along the way.

- September 21: The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis)
- September 28: Let My People Go: Forty Years in the Sinai Desert (Exodus)
- October 5: Why Can't We Be Like the Other Nations? (First and Second Samuel)
- October 12: No Meeting (Columbus Day Weekend)
- October 19: Thus Saith the Lord: The Pre-Exilic Prophets (Amos)
- October 26: By the Waters of Babylon: Stages of Grief on the Way to Hope (Lamentations and 2nd Isaiah)
- November 2: Homecoming: Post-Exilic Faith(s) (Ezra/Nehemiah; Ruth/Jonah; Daniel;

Ecclesiastes)

**Bible 101-B: Four Witnesses- A Critical Introduction to the Four Gospels (Led by the Rector)
Sunday Afternoons at 1:30 PM**

This four-week class will meet at St. Clare House on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 PM to 3 PM beginning on November 9 and continuing 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”

**Bible 101-C: Navigating Paul: A Critical Introduction to Paul’s Theology (Led by the Rector)
Sunday afternoons at 1:30 p.m.**

This two-week class will meet at St. Clare House on Sunday December 7 and 14 from 1:30 PM to 3 PM. This is for beginners and those who wish to make a new beginning. While there is no way to cover the rich depth of St. Paul in two weeks we’ll explore the contours of his theology in ways that it is hoped will re-introduce us to this important pastoral thinker. Our focus will be on the letters to the house-churches in Galatia and Corinth.

December 7: One in Christ: Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Galatians)
December 14: Faith, Hope, and Love in the Midst of Conflict (Corinthians)

**The deadline for the next Little Portion is
Thursday, August 21st**

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 Thursday, August 28th.

(Please note this issue will include all information for our return to regular worship and ministry schedules.)