

TRINITY NEWS

February, 2008

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

MT. POCONO PA

Mission Statement: Share God's unconditional love with everyone.

The season of Lent will begin as this month of February, 2008 begins. On Wednesday evenings we will be using a book by Sarah Parsons called *A Clearing Season*. It has been described as a tool for the spring cleaning of the soul. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find some brief comment on it as the Book of the Month. The clearing of the soul which Ms. Parsons invites us to do, the story which is printed at the end of this piece, and the process of simplifying which is taking place in the Day household all come together at this point in my life in a very powerful way.

It is time for a good spring cleaning! There are many levels on which we do that. One is material. Letting go of things we've hauled around for years is an intriguing activity. Recently I pulled out a smallish plastic bin which I had placed on a shelf in the basement when we moved into the rectory almost 9 years ago. It has not been disturbed during all of that time. I opened it to find a collection ranging from the Master's Degree hoods which my parents received from Yale Divinity School to the piggy bank (with one ear missing) which belongs to my daughter. What to do with such treasures is part of what I am working on these days. Ann gets her one-eared piggy bank, but what in the world does one do with someone else's academic paraphernalia!

Then there are the paperwork and the organizational details of my ministry. This ranges from seminary class notes in about a couple of dozen ring binders, to liturgical details, to simplifying systems in the office, to empowering the lay leadership of the parish by being ever more diligent about getting out of the way so they can do their work. Being a keeper and a hands-on priest this all has its own challenges.

Sarah Parson's book invites me to a place of spiritual spring cleaning which is most amazingly timely. I am grateful that the book was recommended to me for our Wednesday evening study during Lent. As I work with it I wish that everyone in the parish might avail themselves of her gift to us. This is a book which is a "good read" and which can be used either by a group or by an individual.

Perhaps spiritual spring cleaning is a misnomer. Renewing our spiritual journey is a daily endeavor, a daily discipline, a daily journey in the presence of God. With the story of Jesus at hand, we do this work with an incomparable companion. Walk with the Lord. You'll be amazed at what life with him can be.

I do not know the author of the following, but I commend the story to you for your reflection.

Ginny+

GOD LIVES UNDER THE BED

I envy Kevin. My brother Kevin thinks God lives under his bed. At least that's what I heard him say one night. He was praying out loud in his dark bedroom, and I stopped to listen, 'Are you there, God?' he said. 'Where are you? Oh, I see. Under the bed...' I giggled softly and tiptoed off to my own room. Kevin's unique perspectives are often a source of amusement. But that night something else lingered long after the humor. I realized for the first time the very different world Kevin lives in.

He was born 30 years ago, mentally disabled as a result of difficulties during labor. Apart from his size (he's 6-foot-2), there are few ways in which he is an adult. He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7-year-old, and he always will. He will probably always believe that God lives under his bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas, and that airplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them.

I remember wondering if Kevin realizes he is different. Is he ever dissatisfied with his monotonous life? Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop for the disabled, home to walk our cocker spaniel, return to eat his favorite macaroni-and-cheese for dinner, and later to bed. The only variation in the entire scheme is laundry, when he hovers excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her newborn child. He does not seem dissatisfied.

He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work. He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner, and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores. And Saturdays-oh, the bliss of Saturdays! That's the day my Dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of each passenger inside. 'That one's goin' to Chi-car-go!' Kevin shouts as he claps his hands. His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights. And so goes his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips.

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He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth of power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats. His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be.

His hands are diligent. Kevin is never so happy as when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it. He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished. But when his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax.

He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue. Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God.

Not confined by intellectual reasoning, when he comes to Christ, he comes as a child. Kevin seems to know God - to really be friends with Him in a way that is difficult for an 'educated' person to grasp. God seems like his closest companion.

In my moments of doubt and frustrations with my Christianity I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions. It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap. I am. My obligations, my fear, my pride, my circumstances - they all become disabilities when I do not trust them to God's care.

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FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2008

- February 2 - 7pm Candlemas
- February 3 - 10am Bishop Croneberger's Visit/Confirmation
- February 5 - 6pm Pancake Dinner, Parish Hall
7pm Worship Committee, Library
- February 6 - 8:30-11:30am Trinity at Food Pantry
9am & 7pm Holy Eucharist, Ash Wednesday
6pm Soup Supper, Parish Hall
- February 10, 17, 24 - 11:30 Choir Rehearsal, Library
- February 12 - 7pm Vestry
- February 13, 20 & 27 - 6:30pm Potluck, Holy Eucharist & Study, Parish Hall
- February 22 - Newsletter Deadline
- February 29 - Newsletter Mailing
- March 5 - 8:30-11:30am Trinity at Food Pantry
- March 5, 12 - 6:30pm Potluck, Holy Eucharist & Study, Parish Hall
- March 11 - 7pm Vestry, Library
- March 13 - 11am Chrism Mass, Cathedral Church of the Nativity Bethlehem
- March 20 - 7pm Holy Eucharist Maundy Thursday
- March 21 - Noon & 7pm Good Friday Liturgy
Stations of the Cross Following the Noon Service
- March 22 - 7pm Easter Vigil
- March 23 - Easter Day

**Save The Date - Saturday, August 2, 2008 Trinity Episcopal Church
Summer Music Festival at "The Roof" Paradise Township Park**

FEBRUARY CELEBRATIONS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 1 Taylor Ayers
- 3 Patrick Johnson
- 3 Lyle Hixenbaugh
- 4 Lionel Baboolal
- 4 Enikier Holman
- 11 Vernon Yeich
- 14 Penny Clark
- 17 Robert Gower, Jr.
- 19 George Waters

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- 14 Bob & Jane Storm
- 14 Tom & Tracie Salmon
- 21 Steve & Penny Clark

**Trinity Episcopal Church Mission Statement:
Share Gods Unconditional Love
With Everyone.**

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Our Prayers have been requested for:

Ed Benintende

Steve Clark

Joyce DeGasperi

Bob Dexter

Al Eisenecker

Bill Killpatrick

Jon Ross

Ester Stein

Rhonda Treible

Marion Braithwaite

Lauren Boyadis

Deborah Gower

Mary Baker

Jeff Landi

Anita Rivera

Alex Boehm

Victoria Forstein

Karen Kern

Lynn Tinsley

Ann Curry

Lois Rothrock

Dick Orner

Alistair Stewart

Penny Clark

Julie Beech

REFLECTIONS.....

The Christmas season has come and gone, in fact two thousand or more have come and gone and we are now into Epiphany. When I was a small boy I always liked this season of the year, I liked the crisp winter air, the snowdrops

and crocus pushing their way up through the snow as I walked past the gardens of the villagers on my way home from school - a harbinger of Spring.

Every year our Anglican priest would explain to us small boys the meaning of Epiphany and every year the small boys got bigger and the priest became more gray haired and older. Simeon's words set out in the *Nunc Dimittis* have

remained in my memory ever since, they are even more inspiring when set to music by such great composers of church music as Charles H. Stanford. Do you ever think about that - being shown God's salvation I mean, "which he has

prepared for all the world to see". Many people look, but they do not see what Jesus has to offer them - hummm,

reminds me of our own Christmas carol service and the opening part of the gospel of John. The Dean of Kings [college that is] reads the final lesson in a voice that to a young boy sounded like the voice of God; "but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God even to those who believe on his name". Epiphany, salvation, the baby Jesus, snowdrops pushing up through the snow.....that's something to think about in this new year of 2008.

MJG

Stewardship Message: The pledge drive is over?

There are two reasons I want to talk about the pledge drive this month. First and most importantly to thank everyone who took the time to prayerfully consider their pledge, complete the pledge card and turn it in to the church. This has allowed the vestry to undertake the difficult task of reviewing and approving the budget.

Secondly I wanted to say, it is never too late complete a pledge card and you can revise your pledge at any time. For example you just received an unexpected promotion and a 10% raise, feel free to stop by the office and fill out a revised pledge card.

The Stewardship Leadership Team (SLT) has fully embraced year-round stewardship. This means that we are no longer going to focus on the once a year "every member canvas" where you are asked to fill out a pledge card. We will still have a formal pledge drive each fall, but year round stewardship gives us a chance to focus on all aspects of stewardship. We will look at how stewardship a part of each of the ministry teams at Trinity such as Building and Grounds, Hospitality, Music, and Worship.

Book of the Month:

A Clearing Season: Reflections for Lent by Sarah Parsons is a tool for our use as we seek to have a time of spiritual growth during the season of Lent. Ms. Parsons writes from her life experience, sharing her own struggles and challenges to help the reader in looking honestly at his or her own as well. Her approach is realistic. She does not advise the reader to take on more than s/he can handle and she goes even further in making observations about the fact that even simple disciplines may falter. This is a book to have in your library as it will be useful during several seasons of Lent.

St. Valentine's Day ... Random Acts of Unconditional Kindness

In the quest to create a gentler, more loving world, sharing the kindness of God is the easiest tool we can use. Though it is easy to overlook opportunities to be kind, our lives are replete with situations in which we can be helpful, considerate, thoughtful, and friendly to loved ones and associates, as well as strangers. The selfless acts of kindness that have the most profoundly uplifting effects are often the simplest: a word of praise, a gentle touch, a helping hand, a gesture of courtesy, or a smile. Such small kindnesses represent an unconditional, unrestricted form of love that we are free to give, or withhold, at will. When we give the gift of kindness, whether in the form of assistance, concern, or friendliness, our actions create a beacon of happiness and hope that warms people's hearts.

The components of kindness are compassion, respect, and generosity. Simply put, kindness is the conscious act of engaging others in a positive way without asking whether those individuals deserve to be treated kindly. All living beings thrive on kindness. A single, sincere compliment can turn a person's entire world around. Holding a door or thanking someone who has held a door for you can inspire others to practice politeness and make already kind individuals feel good about their efforts. Smiling at people you meet, (even those who make you feel like frowning), can turn a dreary encounter into a delightful one, for both of you. Every kind act has a positive influence on the individual who has performed the act as well as on the recipient, regardless of whether the act is acknowledged. Kindness brings about more kindness and slowly but surely takes a positive toll on humanity.

Weaving the evangelism of kindness into our everyday life can be as easy as choosing to offer a hearty "Good morning" and "Good night" to our coworkers or neighbors, a stranger on the street, or the grocery store clerk. When we commit a kind act with such intention, we are momentarily disconnected from our ego and bonded with the individual who has benefited from our kindness. Being fully present in each moment of our life facilitates kindness as it increases our awareness of the people around us. We discover that each act of kindness we engage in makes the world, in some small way, a better place.

This month, as we prepare to give small packages, notes and candies to tell others of our love for them on St. Valentine's Day, do some random acts of kindness for strangers and tell them that you're doing this because God simply asks us to be nice to one another. As you embrace your gifts and allow their light to shine, you will discover that more and more opportunities to make use of them arise. This is because our gifts are a channel through which God operates. By simply doing what we are good at and also love to do, we make a positive difference. The recognition you receive for your efforts will pale in comparison to the satisfaction you feel when fulfilling your obligation to God and by doing what is pleasing in His sight.

Rob McMahon
Chair, Evangelism Leadership Team

Social Concerns: Looking Backward

As we learned in school, January is named after a Roman god who looked forward and back. I'd like to begin a new year of thinking about Christian ethics and contemporary problems by revisiting some of last year's themes. But first let us consider a larger issue, especially relevant in this election year: what is the proper role of religion in politics in America?

Our Constitution established what Jefferson called "a wall of separation between church and state". It says that there will be no religious test for holding public office, no state-established religion (as our ancestral church in England still is today), and that people shall be free to exercise their religion. Many have believed that this means religion should have no say in political matters. They and others have added, "You can't legislate morals", often pointing to the failure of Prohibition as an example.

But the rule of law is all about the attempt to achieve justice through laws that incorporate moral values. Without them "justice is (only) the rule of the strongest", as one of Socrates' opponents affirmed. Prohibition failed not because you can't legislate morals but because it was too simplistic, making no distinction between responsible and irresponsible consumption of alcohol. We still rightly have laws providing penalties for irresponsible use. What we can't legislate is religion - making Methodism legal but Hinduism not, for example.

In a pluralistic society like ours there are many different views on ethics based on religion. Christians include supporters and opponents of such policies as the war in Iraq, teaching "Creation Science", abortion, environmental regulation and so on. What adherents of any religion or candidates for office can legitimately do is to add their understanding of such matters to the public discussion which ultimately leads to laws about them.

With that background, let us look at some of last year's concerns:

Following the massacre of school children in Amish country and college students at Virginia Tech, we had another wave of mass shootings in December at an Omaha mall and Colorado religious institutions. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has agreed to revisit its 1939 decision on the meaning of the 2d Amendment in response to a Washington DC case opposing that city's ban on hand guns. In 1939 the Court emphasized the "well regulated militia" aspect of the amendment. Any change from that would most likely be in the direction of less control over firearms. I think this would be a tragic mistake or, more simply, just plain awful.

Because the Bill of Rights was not part of the original Constitution, we don't have the same records of debates and discussions that enable us to know what the framers of the Constitution itself had in mind for that document. But surely they did not imagine and would be appalled by the level of insane gun violence we have experienced in America in recent years. I hope the Supreme Court will either provide a clear strict standard for reasonable gun control or make it clear that a revised amendment is needed.

I also hope that gun owners and the National Rifle Association would then be asked to join in an effort to write laws or a new amendment that would distinguish between responsible and irresponsible use of firearms and provide ways to keep them out of the wrong hands and/or to be able to identify the perpetrator by his gun when they are misused. It is time for the NRA to abandon its "slippery slope" argument - the idea that any regulation opens the way to complete confiscation - and join the rest of America in trying to end this epidemic of gun violence.

In a speech in Kansas last month, Defense Secretary Robert Gates called for "a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security - diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development." Gates decried the imbalance between these programs and the vast amounts we spend on the Pentagon.

Gates' speech echoed President Eisenhower's words in 1953: "Every gun that is fired, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The cost of one bomber is a modern school in 30 cities; a single fighter plane, a half million bushels of wheat; a destroyer, new homes for 8000 people. This is not a way of life at all, but humanity hanging on a cross of iron..." Ike went on to propose reductions in arms, with the savings to be put into a fund for world aid and reconstruction.

These military spokesman - a Secretary of Defense and a great general and Commander in Chief - understood what every soldier knows - that the best army is one that never has to be used in anger and that one way of achieving this is to disarm opponents by helping their people to achieve a fair and decent standard of living. Again, to legislate justice.

This is relevant to our current troubles in the Mideast. A "just war" solution would focus on bringing in the UN and other forms of international co-operation to insure the security of Iraq, helping to work out an internal settlement that would keep the 3 religious factions there from killing each other, and seriously working out a wider Mideast peace that is fair to Israelis and Palestinians and helps to raise living standards for the poor in the entire region.

In addition to all Trinity's social services efforts mentioned last month, we should also thank the anonymous Trinity donor who provided \$200 so that our friends in Haiti could continue their annual 'Fet Pov' (feast of the poor) which provides food and other basic needs to the poorest of the poor at Christmas time. Since our Hunger Ministry no longer maintains this connection, let us hope that Trinity will continue this effort in the future.

Finally in this retrospective, I've continued to find myself in a friendly debate with those, including my daughter, who question global warming and continue to read up on the subject. The more I find out, the more I am sure that global warming is real and the result of human impact on the environment, not just a natural cycle.

For example, the magazine Science for Dec 21, 2007 reports a study of the disappearing snow pack in our western states. If you are familiar with that region, you know that a sufficient snowpack, releasing its water in warmer months, is essential to the health of the entire West and that pack has been diminishing every year. Scientists created a computer model of the region and then ran a program that simulated natural forces, which showed no long term effect. A second program, adding man-made effects, resulted in the greatly receding snow pack we actually face. What more needs to be proven? I'm glad to note that Congress and the President have responded to part of this issue by enacting a significant 35 mpg average requirement for US auto manufacturers. You can, indeed, legislate morals.

Happy New Year, Peter Salmon