

## NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

Bishop Garrison sent an e-mail message to me of his intention to attend our October Vestry meeting. An announcement of his impending visit was made at church the Sunday before the meeting. As a result some 40+ members showed up to hear what he had to say.

The bishop asked for questions and that's when the meeting got interesting. The bishop was asked about his position on the issue of homosexuality. He stated that his position was well known. During the rest of the questioning the bishop began to say some of the most incredible things I had ever heard a bishop say. I wish to address some of those things in this article.

The bishop made the statement that some men just can't get married to a woman and vice-versa. Someone in our congregation made the comment, "That's called being a bachelor (or bachelorette)." While the bishop's statement is true, that does not mean, according to the Bible, that they have God's permission to engage in sex outside of marriage.

The Bishop indicated that we all interpret scripture differently and we should just be able to get along in spite of our different interpretations. What the bishop failed to recognize is that all interpretations can't be right at the same time, no matter how sincere the interpreter. By following the basic rules of interpretation, looking at the context of the passage, and by comparing our interpretation to the writings of the early Church Fathers, one can have a lot of confidence in his or her interpretation.

If we follow the Bishop's reasoning to its logical conclusion then we could say that a person could interpret the Bible in such a way as to justify anything (i.e., child abuse, rape, incest, etc). It would simply be a matter of one's own interpretation.

The bishop made a most unbelievable statement. He said that the Bible has been changed throughout the history of the Church and that newer translations give us a new way of looking at the Scriptures. He cited the fact that the Apocrypha was added to the Bible by the Roman Church and then removed from the Bible by the Protestant Reformation. The bishop was actually confirming what we were saying. The early Church did not view the Apocrypha on the same level as the rest of Holy Scripture (this is seen by the fact that the fifth century church came out with the "official books of the Bible." When the Roman church elevated the

Apocrypha to the level of Scripture, we would say that the Church was in error. That error was corrected at the Reformation. Just as that error was corrected, so, too are we trying to correct the error brought about by the Episcopal Church's attempt to change historical moral teaching.

Even the newest translations accepted by the Episcopal Church condemn homosexual sexual relations.

According to the Bishop the proper way to interpret Scripture is through the prevailing culture. Thus, he surmises, since the culture that he is surrounded by accepts homosexuality, that means that the Bible must be interpreted in light of that acceptance. He implied that the cultures of those opposed to homosexuality (those in the global south) caused them to read the Bible in a way that condemns homosexuality.

What the bishop failed to state is that there are many in this country and in other northern and western nations who oppose homosexual behavior on biblical grounds. Those of us who are orthodox in our beliefs do not believe that the Church should change biblical doctrine to suit the prevailing culture.

The bishop said that the Church changed its teaching on slavery. My study of history affirms that some in the church advocated slavery, but not everyone at various times. The Bible never endorsed the sort of slavery that forced one into servitude. God is about setting the slaves free (see Moses and the New Testament). Just because some in the Church advocated slavery does not mean it was right or accepted by the whole of the Church.

The Church changed its mind on the subject of marriage and divorce, so says the bishop. The fact is that the Bible does give clear grounds for divorce such as infidelity and when an unbeliever leaves a believer. The church has become lax related to the issue of marriage mainly because we have been culturally influenced. Again, we must look to what Scripture and the early Church Fathers taught and not what the prevailing culture says. Just because the Episcopal Church has changed its practices related to marriage and divorce, those changes do not necessarily make it right.

When asked if the Bible affirms homosexuality, the bishop could not give an answer – because it does not.

The bishop said that we should be able to live with our differences of interpretation and just

get along. The problem with that line of thinking is that it does not work both ways.

There is another problem with the bishop's view in this idea of the prevailing culture. If, for example, the culture and then the Church should embrace the teachings of the KKK, how many liberals would be content to live with those differences?

By saying that we all have different interpretations, the bishop is, in essence, saying that truth no longer means anything. Truth becomes relative. We can no longer look for truth in the Bible, because Jesus is the truth (according to the bishop), not the Bible.

If we don't know for sure that the Bible is the truth of God, then how do we know we are worshipping the true Jesus or the true God? How do we know that Jesus is the truth unless we read it in the Bible? If the Bible is not a source of truth then how can we know for sure that Jesus is the truth? There may be many in the Episcopal Church who are worshipping, as St. Paul said, "another Jesus" and following "another gospel, which is really no gospel at all." This Jesus and gospel totally contradict the Jesus and gospel understood by the apostles and by the Early Church.

If the Bible does not speak definitively about moral issues like sexuality, then how can we claim to have any standards of right or wrong? What would be wrong with adultery, child abuse, bestiality, and things like that? Who is to say that those things are wrong? Wouldn't that just be a matter of one's own interpretation of Scripture?

St. Paul said, "For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough," (2 Cor.11:4). By St. Michael's standing for truth and biblical morality, we are saying to the Diocese and the National Church, "we are not going to continue to "put up with false and destructive teaching easily enough."

The Bereans tested what St. Paul said by comparing that to Scripture to see if it was true. While we honor the position of the bishop, we must also test what the bishop says in light of Holy Scripture. If he, or anyone, deviates from the Scripture and its clear teachings as were understood by the Early Church, then his teachings must be rejected.

*"I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once delivered to all the saints"*  
(Jude3)

Brothers and sisters, be strong during this time of testing in the Episcopal Church. The Lord is preparing to rise up with healing in His wings. God will make a way, where there seems to be no way.  
WILL YOU HELP US GROW?

Fr. Roger

### **THURSDAY NIGHT ALIVE**

A mid-week gathering of St. Michael's features Holy Communion, Contemporary worship with Prayer and Praise, and Bible teaching. This "Thursday Night Alive" will be held on December 18th at 7 p.m. in the church Nave. Episcopalians as well as non-Episcopalians are welcome.

On the other Thursdays of the month anyone is welcome to meet for prayer, sharing, and praise in the Conference Room at 7 p.m.

### **HANGING OF THE GREENS**

There will be the usual decorating of the Sanctuary for Christmas on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Come to church in your "work" clothes that day as we beautify our Church home for the birth of our Lord Jesus.

### **CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS**

Please have your Christmas memorials for loved ones into the office by December 17<sup>th</sup> so they may be remembered at Christmas.

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

Our Annual Meeting will be January 11, 2004. In regard to this, please, all organizations try to get your reports into the office **no later than January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004** so they may be printed and collated for distribution to the congregation. Thank you.

**ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM** – Next meeting is December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7 p.m.

### **VESTRY**

Our December meeting will be on Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

## ASK THE RECTOR

### What is the latest from the American Anglican Council?

A letter was written to all the faithful after the recent developments in New Hampshire.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I write to you nearly two weeks after the sadly historic consecration of V. Gene Robinson. Countless numbers of you have rightly expressed your dismay, sadness, and confusion over this consecration. I wish to outline a few very specific and important developments concerning our church, its present crisis, and our bright future together in Christ.

#### *The Primates' Statement*

Many of you have wondered about the statement from the Primates Meeting in October. My initial reaction was, as I am sure yours was, disappointment. Since it was in the historic language of Anglican diplomacy, its deep significance might not be apparent to all. But be assured. The statement is actually an unprecedented and significant intervention on the part of the Anglican Communion Primates in the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada. It reaffirms the Lambeth 1998 core teaching on human sexuality. It promises and encourages adequate Episcopal oversight. It states the clear resolve of the majority of Anglicans around the world that they cannot abide by the false teaching and schismatic actions approved by the 74th General Convention. These points and more are highlighted on the AAC website: <http://www.americananglican.org>.

You should also know that at our meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury following the release of the Primates' Statement, he commended our work for the future. Archbishop Williams is a godly man with great insight and wisdom, and it is clear that he desires unity in the Anglican Communion. However, he acknowledges that realignment is a coming reality, and we must be prepared for it.

We have a critical mission ahead for us all: to insure that there will be an orthodox Anglican expression of the Christian faith in North America.

## *Adequate Episcopal Oversight*

An important part of the Primates' Statement is a mandate for "adequate Episcopal oversight." This is a direct recognition that many of you are in dioceses and congregations that support the actions of the General Convention concerning human sexuality. The Primates are concerned that you have a sustained Episcopal relationship available to you that will enable you to flourish as people of biblical and historic faith. The AAC has formed a task force of bishops to deal with the growing need for Episcopal oversight. We have also posted guidelines and an application form for Episcopal oversight on our website, and we have already received many applications. It will take a little more time to respond to the needs as they arise, but we are underway.

Bishop Duncan and I have just returned from a meeting in New York with Presiding Bishop Griswold. The conversation was certainly civil, but it was also very blunt. We laid out the picture as we see it, and we made our and your needs crystal clear. The Chancellor, David Booth Beers, made it clear that the canons make no provision for bypassing the local bishop's authority. I made it clear that any plan that did not have an over-ride over the local bishop if he/she was non-cooperative simply was inadequate. The Presiding Bishop is now fully aware of our efforts to implement adequate Episcopal oversight and he indicated to us during our meeting that his office will not stand in the way.

As an historian by training, and although I am generally conservative, one of my heroes was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who as president inherited a nation on the verge of revolt. The pain of the Great Depression was overwhelming. FDR put together a creative group of alphabet government agencies to address the deepest needs and pains of the nation. It is true that later many of those agencies were ruled by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional, but in the meanwhile they helped prevent revolution and save the nation. I think that is what real leadership is about, reaching beyond the normal limits to address the enormity of the problem and trying to save the nation. Are any of the church's leaders willing to try as hard to address the crisis in the Episcopal Church, as FDR was to address our nation's crisis? I pray so!

We share together at this time a struggle with impatience and vulnerability. We realize that above the surface of the water, it may not look like a lot is happening. However, beneath the surface, there is a great deal of praying, preparing strategizing, and planning. We all know that good solid ministry takes time. We are called to be persevering but we must also be assured that progress is being made. It is!

Please also be aware that the AAC is deeply alarmed about the increasing reports from all over the country of incidents in which those of orthodox Anglican conviction are being pressured and intimidated, whether subtly or more overtly. It saddens our hearts that a number of those in power could be so uncaring and exclusive toward those in genuine grief about a church which they believe has betrayed them and the Gospel of our Lord. It is vitally important that all of these incidents are reported to us so that we may communicate the truth both nationally and internationally as quickly and accurately as possible. We will be assembling a "martyrs' page" to document these incidents. The sad truth is that this great endeavor we are about will not be accomplished without some of us having to be martyrs. I ask you to please pray for those faithful Episcopalians who will be persecuted for their stand for biblical orthodoxy.

### *The Future*

While these days are tense, the hope of the gospel is sure. As I look into our near future I see an emerging church of strength and resolve. I see a church growing with energy for a new emphasis on mission. At our conference in Dallas, we saw over 2700 men and women express their conviction for a renewed and revitalized church in North America. Do not lose heart. We have much to do and much of it may be slower than we would like. But our God is a faithful God. "The one who calls us is faithful and He will do it!" (I Thess. 5:24)

I covet your prayers for the AAC bishops, the AAC board leadership, the AAC staff and all who work for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Canon David C. Anderson  
AAC President

**P.S. Please continue to pray for the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of His word to be revealed in our church and in our nation. Amen.**

### **WOMEN'S GUILD**

The Women's Guild is having a busy month of December. Our Quiet Day will start off the Advent Season. That's on Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:30 a.m. and will continue through lunch at about noon.

Then on Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> we will have our annual Christmas Luncheon at the Italian Village. Your paid reservation should be in no later than December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Call either Virginia Bradley at 839-2411 or Lois Conliffe at 838-6119. Guild members are asked to bring a wrapped gift for a resident of Canaan House. We hope you will find time for a social respite before the last minute shopping and general holiday bustle. *Virginia Bradley, President*

### **OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

Thank you for your support of "Operation Christmas Child." The gift-filled shoeboxes will be distributed by Samaritan's Purse to needy children around the world. We here at St. Michael's contributed 36 gift-filled shoe boxes that will bring happiness to boys and girls who otherwise wouldn't receive any presents. Each shoebox also includes Gospel literature to introduce children and their families to God's greatest gift, His Son, Jesus Christ. We are happy to be part of this project to bring joy and the message of Jesus Christ to children around the world.

### **ADDRESS CHANGES**

Please advise us if there have been any changes in your address, phone number or E-mail address.

Also, we like to keep your birthdays and anniversaries updated, so please advise us if you are not on the posted lists.

Another thing we like to know are the Shut-ins and those on our Sick List. These are posted on the bulletin boards in the main entry of the church and also in the Undercroft. Please check these periodically and add or delete names as you see fit.

Thank you. Madeline- Parish Secretary

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

6 Bruce VonHasseln 20 Robert DuVall  
7 Bob Gardinier **25 Lord Jesus**  
14 Cliff Fox 25 M. Donhauser  
14 George Baer 26 M.J. Bubar  
16 Molly Allen 27 Don Szen  
18 M. Schwedt 30 M. Moghabghab

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/2 – Norma & Cliff Fox  
12/30 – Shirley & Chuck Gardinier  
12/31 – Addie & Jerry Broome

## SALT OF THE EARTH

“You are like salt for everyone on earth. But if salt no longer tastes like salt, how can it make food salty? All it is good for is to be thrown out and walked on.” Matthew 5:13

Salt is a purifying, preserving agent. In the Roman world it symbolized purity. Jesus compared believers to salt, demonstrating the influence of their lives in preserving and bringing purity to the world. Salt was also used as a form of money. Due to its great value as a basic staple, Roman soldiers were often paid with salt. That is the basis of the word “salary”. As a flavoring, salt is sprinkled over food. Having no distinct flavor of its own, it enhances the flavor that is already in the food. As believers, we must sprinkle ourselves onto the world to make a difference in it. *Virginia Bradley*

“The best vitamin for a Christian is B1.”

## PLEASE PRAY FOR

Some of you know I have been diagnosed with Scleroderma. My specialist tells me I am vulnerable the next 6-9 months, so if you are moved to do so, I would appreciate your prayers for protection for my esophagus, lungs, heart, kidneys and digestive system. Also that I will not be allergic to a new medication and that God will completely heal me. Thank you. *Carolyn Flynn*

## HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE LATELY?

Bob Weekley, our Webmaster, has been working hard to refine and improve our website which can be found at [www.st-michaels-buffalo.org](http://www.st-michaels-buffalo.org).

You will find current news and events, a calendar section, and each month's newsletter highlights. A “Virtual Tour” gives visitors to the sight the opportunity to see pictures of St. Michael's

and some of our members in action. There are also definitions for many “Episcopal” words to help the seeker and long-time Episcopalian.

There are links to some helpful websites and other interesting items. Check it out.

## VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

+Bishop Garrison talked to the Vestry and others gathered about our position and his position related to the Bible and sexuality. He also told us of the consequences to not paying our pledge to the diocese.

+Vestry voted to take money out of the Advest account to pay the outstanding balance of our 2003 pledge.

+A donation has been made to purchase a hand held microphone system for the church Sanctuary/Nave.

+Voted to take up to \$500 from Admin Team funds to pay for Christmas ad in Buffalo News.

+The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 11 with one service at 9 a.m. followed by a potluck brunch.

+Nominees for the 2004 Vestry are being sought. The Nominating Committee (made up of the Wardens and the outgoing Vestry members) will meet again to put together a slate of nominees to be elected at the Annual Meeting.

+ Education team announced that the Sunday School was going well and enjoying their new curriculum.

+Missions and Outreach announced the projects they have been funding and plans for future outreach efforts.

+Nurturing Team announced that the Prayer chains are seeing answers to prayer and are greatly encouraged. Gary Kadow volunteered to head up a Planned Giving team to help our members know how best to remember the church in their estates.

+Worship Team announced the Thanksgiving Eve service to be held at Cleve Hill Lutheran Church (ecumenical service in which St. Michael's will be participating) and at our Church on Thanksgiving Day. The one service on the Fifth Sunday in November will be cancelled and we will be having the regular 8 & 10:30 services for the first Sunday in Advent. We will resume our one service fifth Sunday in February.

## **SUNDAY MORNING PRAYER MINISTERS NEEDED**

We are looking for a few good Prayers. Would you be interested in being trained to pray for Fr. Roger at 7:30 a.m. in the Conference Room? We are also looking for people who would be willing to be trained to pray for people at the Chapel altar during the Communion portion of our Eucharistic services.

If you think you might like to explore one or both of these ministries, please contact Bob Weekley at 897-3722 or rweekley@aol.com.

### **A PRAYER**

Most merciful God, by sending your Son Jesus Christ, you have called us into belonging to you, and through his death and resurrection, you lead us into everlasting life: Cast down all that stands between us and this truth, strengthen us to trust your Holy Spirit within us, and empower us to live the life that comes from belonging to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **YOU CAN HELP**

As most of you know we have been printing out the whole service in our bulletins each week. Many have commented how easy it is to follow the service now. It is especially easy for visitors to enter into our worship.

Some have asked if it might be possible to help defray the costs of this printing. There are three ways you may do this. One is to buy paper for our copy machine. We use legal size 8 ½ x 14 20 lb. bond white paper. If you can buy a ream or two (or a case) you can help reduce our office expenses.

The second way to help is to purchase paper for our newsletter. We currently are using legal size pastel yellow or cream colored paper- 8 ½ x 14 20 lb bond.

The third way to help is to purchase either a laser jet black ink cartridge (HP 74 L) or a black ink jet cartridge (HP #29). This will help reduce our costs of printing things from the computer for our bulletins and newsletters.

## **MID-WEEK EUCHARIST WITH PRAYER AND PRAISE**

Would you like a service in which we sing contemporary songs, have a time of Bible teaching, sharing and prayer? Would you like to combine this with Communion? If so, you are invited to our Thursday Night Alive service on Thursday, December 18 at 7 p.m.. in the Church. Come and bring a friend. The service will last about an hour.

Every other Thursday we meet together for a time of Prayer and Praise, sharing, a short Bible teaching and fellowship. All are welcome to join us in the Conference room at 7 p.m.