

NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

As we begin a new year I want to urge you to give some thought to your worldview (how you view everything in this world). Why is this important? Consider what the WorldNetDaily.com website reveals in a new survey by pollster George Barna. Barna's survey finds only 9 percent of born-again Christians hold a biblical worldview.

Barna, who surveyed 2,033 adults in his study, found only 4 percent of the general population have a biblical worldview and suggests many of the nation's moral and spiritual challenges are directly attributable to this fact.

"If Jesus Christ came to this planet as a model of how we ought to live, then our goal should be to act like Jesus," said Barna. "Sadly, few people consistently demonstrate the love, obedience and priorities of Jesus. The primary reason that people do not act like Jesus is because they do not think like Jesus. Behavior stems from what we think – our attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions. Although most people own a Bible and know some of its content, our research found that most Americans have little idea how to integrate core biblical principles to form a unified and meaningful response to the challenges and opportunities of life. We're often more concerned with survival amidst chaos than with experiencing truth and significance."

For the purposes of the research, a biblical worldview was defined as believing that absolute moral truths exist; that such truth is defined by the Bible; and firm belief in six specific religious views. Those views were that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe and He still rules it

today; salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned; Satan is real; a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the Bible is accurate in all its teachings.

Only 7 percent of Protestants overall maintained a biblical worldview, according to the study. Of adults who attended mainline Protestant churches, only 2 percent shared those values. Among Catholics, less than one-half of 1 percent had a biblical worldview. The denominations that produced the highest proportions of adults with a biblical worldview were non-denominational Protestant churches, with 13 percent, Pentecostal churches, with 10 percent, and Baptist churches with 8 percent.

Among the most prevalent alternative worldviews was postmodernism, which seemed to be the dominant perspective among the two youngest generations.

One of the most striking insights from the research was the influence of such a way of thinking upon people's behavior. Adults with a biblical worldview possessed radically different views on morality, held divergent religious beliefs and demonstrated vastly different lifestyle choices. People's views on morally acceptable behavior are deeply impacted by their worldview.

Upon comparing the perspectives of those who have a biblical worldview with those who do not, the former group were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation; 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness; 15 times less likely to condone homosexual sex; 12 times less likely to accept profanity; and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable.

In addition, less than one-half of one percent of those with a biblical

worldview said voluntary exposure to pornography was morally acceptable (compared to 39 percent of other adults), and a similarly miniscule proportion endorsed abortion (compared to 46 percent of adults who lack a biblical worldview).

Among the more intriguing lifestyle differences were the lesser propensity for those with a biblical worldview to gamble (they were eight times less likely to buy lottery tickets and 17 times less likely to place bets); to get drunk (three times less likely); and to view pornography (two times less common). They were also twice as likely to have discussed spiritual matters with other people in the past month and twice as likely to have fasted for religious reasons during the preceding month. While one out of every eight adults who lack a biblical worldview had sexual relations with someone other than their spouse during the prior month, less than one out of every 100 individuals who have such a worldview had done so.

So, let me ask you – “What is your worldview?” Would you like to develop a biblical worldview? I have compiled a list of several books that can start you on the road to a good foundation in this development. I will post it on our website and make it available to anyone who requests one.

LET US GROW!
FR. ROGER

ASK THE RECTOR

Is it okay for Christians not to attend a local church?

No. Hebrews 10:25 specially instructs us not to forsake “our own

assembling together.” The Christian life as described in Scripture is to be lived within the context of the family of God and not in isolation (cf. Ephesians 3:14, 15; Acts 2). Moreover, it is in attending church that we become equipped for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16). Further, it is within the context of attending church that we receive the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The Bible knows nothing of a “lone ranger Christian.” Many logs burning together burn very brightly, but when a log falls off to the side, the embers quickly die out (see Ephesians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:10, 11; and 1 Peter 3:8).

Obviously, there are exceptions, such as when a person is physically unable to attend church. Some in that condition have invited others to join them for an in home, informal, small group meeting of the church.

VESTRY NOMINEES INVITED

Do you know someone who would like to be on the Vestry? Would you like to be nominated for a Vestry position? If so, please submit your name or the name of your nominee to Sr. Warden Donna Strain. Please submit the names of any nominees by January 1. Each nominee must agree to serve three years and be willing to attend two meetings a month (one Vestry meeting and one Team meeting). Each Vestry member is expected to fully participate in the life and activities of the parish. Each Vestry nominee must be an official member, be a giver of record in the parish, and tithe or working toward a tithe.

WHAT'S NEW ON OUR WEBSITE?

Bob Weekley, our Webmaster, has been working hard to refine and improve our website which can be found at www.st-michaels-buffalo.org.

Some of the new things you will find include copies of some of Fr. Roger's sermons, and articles. Still on the website is a copy of Fr. Roger's Doctoral dissertation.

You will also notice that there is some new material on our "Seekers Page." We have included a step by step way for a person to come to know Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You will find the usual current news and events, a calendar section, and each month's newsletter highlights. A "Virtual Tour" gives visitors to the site 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. A couple of links you may want to click are www.virtuosityonline.org and www.americananglican.org. Check it out.

DEC. VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

+Many tools that had been requested by the Senior Warden have been donated. They will be kept in the furnace room for any needed repairs to the church.

+Voted to send \$600 to cover our portion of the consultation fee for our attorney related to possible responses to the recent General Convention decisions.

+Voted to purchase oil candles for the Advent Wreath.

+Nurture reported some exciting new developments in the area of planned giving education.

+Nominating Committee announced nominees to replace those who are rotating off the Vestry in 2004. Those nominees are Chuck Gardinier, Robert Howard, and Ronna Bulera. The nominees for Convention Delegates are Jan Rickard, Chuck and Shirley Gardinier. Alternates for Convention nominees are Mark Dascomb, Addie Broome, Michael Rickard. The Rector announced that nominations are still open and will be accepted up through the Annual Meeting.

+Thanks were offered to those leaving the Vestry: Mark Dascomb, Addie Broome, and Eve David.

+The 2004 budget was discussed, amended and approved.

+Voted to follow the wishes of the members of St. Michael's who submitted pledge cards for the work of the diocese and national church. The Vestry voted to make a pledge to the Diocese of Western New York in line with the above wishes.

+Discussed preparations for possible affiliation with the American Anglican Council (AAC). The congregation will have an opportunity at the Annual Meeting to discuss this possibility and vote on whether to affiliate.

+Discussed the possibility of appealing for alternative Episcopal oversight. This, too, will be discussed at the Annual Meeting.

MID-WEEK PRAYER AND PRAISE ON HIATUS

Our mid-week Prayer and Praise will be on hiatus for a while. Keep watching your newsletters and bulletins for the announcement of our next gathering.

SPECIAL ANNUAL MEETING

Each year St. Michael's is supposed to have an annual meeting at which members of the congregation can come together to hear about the "state of the church."

This year's Annual Meeting takes on even greater significance in light of all that is going on in the Episcopal Church.

All members are invited to our Annual Meeting which will be held after a 9 a.m. service (one service only this day). After the service we will adjourn downstairs for a potluck brunch. Each member is asked to bring food suitable for a brunch to share. We will provide the beverages.

After the brunch we will begin our Annual Meeting featuring an Annual Report available for each member to take with them. Those in attendance will hear highlights from 2003, goals for 2004, a report on the American Anglican Council, the presentation of the 2004 budget, and an election of Vestry members and Convention Delegates (see related article on Vestry nominees).

Members will have an opportunity to ask questions about anything related to St. Michael's church.

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.

Welcome Buff Crofts, our newest Prayer Minister.

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

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 8 ½ x 11 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.

Many thanks go out to those who have already donated paper to the office.

VESTRY MEETING

This is a reminder to all current and new Vestry members. We will meet on Tuesday, January 13 at 7 p.m. Any member of the congregation is welcome to attend this meeting in the Conference Room.

EPIPHANY SERVICE-JAN. 6

St. Michael's will celebrate the "Feast of Lights" on the Day of Epiphany, January 6. This service will feature a candlelight Eucharist, Epiphany hymns and the story of the three Wise men.

Following the service we will go downstairs for an Epiphany party featuring a "Kings' Cake" containing symbolic items such as a thimble, a cross and dime. The thimble represents our labor, the cross represents our Lord, and the dime represents our luxuries (all of our material possessions). Traditionally, the person who receives the piece of cake with the thimble gets the honor and joy of making the cake for next year's celebration.

Make plans to join us in church on Tuesday, January 6 at 7 p.m.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our Sunday School children have been working on a special Christmas pageant to be performed during the "twelve days of Christmas" on January 4 during the 10:30 a.m. service.

This pageant will feature drama, comedy, costumes and a contemporary story related to the Christmas season.

Please come and support our Sunday School as they remind us of the importance of Christmas time.

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." - Bobby, age 7

TOWARD A GROWING MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

Does your marriage need a spark?
Are you having struggles in your

relationship? Make plans to attend the "Toward a Growing Marriage Conference" on March 6.

This seminar is not a formal, dry, marriage conference. It's a time of fun and discovery to help you build the love relationship of your dreams. This seminar is also good for those planning to be married.

It features one of the premier speakers in the area of marriage, Dr. Gary Chapman.

If you want more information about this Buffalo conference see Fr. Roger, go to www.MoodyConferences.com, or call 1-888-824-8246.

ST. MICHAEL'S NOMINEES SOUGHT

At this year's Annual Meeting Fr. Roger will be awarding the first annual "St. Michael's Medal" award. This award will go to individuals who have gone above and beyond normal service of their church, and have showed exemplary dedication and sacrifice for St. Michael's.

Please submit the names of anyone you believe is deserving of this recognition to Fr. Roger by January 7. From those nominated a number of recipients will be chosen to receive this first St. Michael's Medal.

DA VINCI CODE DEBUNKED

Some have read a book that is so full of error in the guise of historical speculation that confusion has ensued.

You may want to read a review and critique of the book The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown. You may read this review and critique at www.tektonics.org/davincicrude.htm. or you may request a copy from Fr. Roger.

OPLATEK – CHRISTMAS WAFER

A Polish tradition Christmas Eve or Christmas Day is to take a wafer, break and share it with your family and friends and make your Christmas Oblation of best wishes to them, accompanied by expressions of forgiveness. Thus we share joy and harmony in Christ as we share our Christmas family meals. As we continue this blessed tradition, or begin a new heritage, our Christmas wafer helps us bring peace and happiness to our hearts and homes.

QUOTE WORTH NOTING

"It seems to me that the 'extremist' elements in every Church are nearest one another and the liberal and 'broad-minded' people in each Body could never be united at all. The world of dogmatic Christianity is a place in which thousands of people of quite different types keep on saying the same thing, and the world of 'broad-mindedness' and watered-down 'religion' is a world where a small number of people (all of the same type) say totally different things and change their minds every few minutes. We shall never get re-union from them." C. S. Lewis from *God in the Dock*.

CAROLING PARTY

Join together on Sunday, December 28th at 5 p.m. for a Caroling Party! Who will we be serenading? Our neighbors in the immediate area. This will be a great opportunity to spread the good news to those around us. Transportation will be provided for any who wish it. We'll then return to the undercroft where the Men's Club will have pizza, wings, hot chocolate for kids of all ages, and maybe

even some Christmas cookies. Please sign the sign-up sheets in the vestibule and undercroft so we can plan to have ample goodies to nosh.

INVITATION FROM ST. BART'S:

The women at St. Bartholomew's warmly invite you to join us this January in taking the Beth Moore course, "Beloved Disciple." Classes will be offered Wednesday mornings 10:30-12:30 and Thursday evenings 6:30-8:30, beginning January 14th and 15th and concluding March 24th and 25th. The format will include worship, video presentation, small group meeting, prayer and home study. This is an 11 week course focusing on the Gospel of John.

To cover the cost of the workbook, please mail your check for \$15.00 made out to St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, to Anne DeCenso, 87 Ivy Lea, Kenmore NY 14223 by January 2nd and indicate whether you will attend Wed. AM or Thurs PM. Bring your friends.

IF YOU ARE SICK

In this season of colds, flue, sneezing and coughing... If you are sick, it would be better for you to remain at home, rather than coming to church and spreading your germs. If you have a cold, please do not receive the Precious Blood at Communion or extend the Sign of the Peace until you are well. Remember, if you have difficulty getting around in good weather, please stay home when it is icy or snowy. God understands.

THE 7 UPS

Wake UP!! Decide to have a good day.
“Today is the day the Lord hath made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it. Ps.18:24
Dress UP!! The best way to dress up is
to put on a smile. “The Lord does not
look at the things man looks at. Man
looks at outward appearance, but God
looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7
Shut UP!! Say nice things and learn to
listen. “He who guards his lips guards
his soul” Proverbs 13:3
Stand UP!! For what you believe in.
Stand for something or you will fall for
anything. “Let us not be weary in doing
good; for at the proper time, we will reap
a harvest if we do not give up.
Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us
do good.” Galations 6:9-10
Look UP!! To the Lord. “I can do
everything through Christ who
strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13
Reach UP!! For something higher.
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not to your own
understanding.” Proverbs 3:5-6
Lift UP!! Your prayers. “Do not worry
about anything; instead PRAY ABOUT
EVERYTHING.” Philippians 4:6

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*

A NEW YEAR'S BLESSING

Author Unknown
May your guardian Angel
Forever be near
To guide and protect you
Throughout the New Year.
May your blessings be many,
Your failures be few,
As you embrace the future
With hope born anew.
May you live day to day
With nothing to fear,
God bless you and keep you
Throughout the New Year.
Happy New Year!