

NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

I was heartened to see, at our special Parish Meeting last month, the support that we have here at St. Michael's for orthodox doctrine and morality. The meeting was designed to help the Vestry know where each of the congregation members are related to the truth of God's Word and what direction we should go as a member of the Diocese of Western New York, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

What we heard from you was a resounding commitment to stand for the truth of Scripture, as the Church has always understood it. There was a great majority who were willing to take whatever action is necessary to assure St. Michael's future in its defense of orthodox, biblical teaching.

Since some were not at the meeting, the Vestry is in the process of contacting each of those folks to survey their opinions related to the questions asked at the meeting. As a result, we cannot give you a full report at the time of this writing.

Please know that your Vestry has made a commitment not to act in a hasty manner to do anything to jeopardize this church. The Vestry will continue to keep you informed of what it is doing and of any plans for the future.

This is a time of great turmoil and strife in the Episcopal Church and in this diocese. I would ask your continued prayers for your Vestry and for our church. God has a plan for us. We need wisdom to know His plan and the courage to follow where He leads.

LET US GROW!

Fr. Roger

ASK THE RECTOR

Does the Bible actually claim to be the "Word of God" in so many words?

Yes, it does! Many times the Bible claims to be "the Word of God" in these very words or their equivalent. Jesus told some of the Jewish leaders of his day, "Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition" (Matthew 15:6). Paul speaks of the Scriptures as "the very words of God" (Romans 3:2). And Peter declares, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). And the writer of the Hebrews affirms, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus used the phrase "word of God" as equivalent with the Law (Torah) and Scripture, asserting: "Is it not written in your Law...to whom the word of God came...and the Scripture cannot be broken..."(John 10:34-35).

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

St. Peter puts St. Paul's letters on par with "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16).

When we finish each lesson on Sundays the reader concludes with "the Word of the Lord," or "the Gospel of the Lord." Now you know why.

Adapted from Who made God? By Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler- Zondervan, 2003. Used with permission.

WEBSITE ADDRESS

If you haven't visited our website lately, check it out at www.st-michaels-buffalo.org. Bob Weekley updates this website for us regularly. It even has a calendar of activities and services in case you lose this newsletter.

JUNE VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Voted to send \$500 to the Anglican Church in Africa through Ekklesia.
- + Executive Committee will begin to do some future planning for St. Michael's.
- + Parish Retreat in the planning stages with hopes of inviting Bishop Ackermann to be the speaker.
- + St. Michael's Wardens invited all of the wardens from the diocese to come for a discussion of the fair share system and the related decisions of Diocesan Council. Over 20 wardens came. It was a chance to stay connected with other churches in the diocese.
- + Nurture team planning on developing some small groups to help grow the church.
- + The Vestry received a mailing from the Bishop, which said that as a result of Diocesan Council action St. Michael's, and 25+ parishes and missions have been declared dependant. A letter will be sent to the Bishop challenging that declaration.
- + Chuck Gardinier agreed to have his name put up for nomination for Deputy to General Convention at the next Diocesan Convention.
- + Voted to loan Fr. Roger \$2,000 for roof and interior repairs to his house.

MID-WEEK PRAYER AND PRAISE ON HAITUS.

Our Thursday Night Prayer and Praise gathering will not be meeting in July. We will begin again in August.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

When a person recognizes their sinful condition and how their sins have separated them from the Holy God and destined them for hell, they then are open to the message of the grace of Christ. When they respond to the message of Jesus' payment for our sins and the salvation available through faith in his shed blood on the Cross, and confirmed by His resurrection from the dead, then they can invite him into their lives to be the ruler from that time on.

When a person makes that decision, Jesus promised that they would receive the Holy Spirit. Once a person has the Holy Spirit living inside of them they are as the Bible says, "born again." They have a new start in life.

From that time on they become disciples of Jesus. In order to have the power to continue as His disciples and to be his witnesses (ambassadors) one must be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1-47).

A person is filled with the Holy Spirit by asking Jesus to "baptize" or "fill" him or her with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Luke 11:13).

Ask Jesus today to fill you, and then, as the apostles and disciples waited in expectation, so you, too, should wait expecting to be filled.

FR. ROGER ON VACATION

Fr. Roger will be taking much of his vacation from July 5-28. During that time Sunday services will go on with the help of visiting clergyman Fr. Otis Hovencamp and the Lay Readers. The Office will still be open 9-12 daily.

Fr. Hovencamp is an orthodox priest resident in our diocese.

ARE WE REALLY AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH? by The Right Reverend Dave Bena

Last week, as I was checking in at an airport, the airline staff person asked if I happened to be a Catholic or an Episcopal priest. When I said I was an Episcopalian, she responded, "Well, are you an inclusive Episcopalian or an exclusive Episcopalian?"

Sensing that I was being baited, I replied, "What does the word 'inclusive' mean to you?" She hesitated, and then said, "Oh, I don't know...a place where everybody can go and feel welcome."

"Good answer," I quickly shot back, "Then I am a part of the inclusive church...But tell me, when you say a place where everybody can go and feel welcome, do you mean that there should be no rules regarding ethical behavior for the members of the church? Is it OK for someone to come every week and steal a purse on the way out? Do we need to teach him some ethics about stealing being wrong, even though some would say that kleptomaniacs don't choose that lifestyle - it just seems to be with them from birth?"

"Well, of course we have to have rules. I don't want someone stealing my purse. What I'm talking about is an inclusive church that welcomes everyone in spite of their sexual proclivities."

"Oh," I responded slowly, "so actually, when you say inclusive church, you're really confining it to a SEXUALLY inclusive church?" "Right!" she said gleefully, seeing that she had made contact! "OK, now let's look at that. Do you mean there should be no rules regarding sexual behavior? Is it OK for another woman in the pew to hit on your husband? I've been told that some people find it impossible to sustain a life-long relationship with another person, and that they have within them an

uncontrollable need to have multiple sexual relationships. If we find folks like that, should we say it is OK for them to commit adultery or go through a number of marriages and to feel really good about themselves in spite of that problem?"

"You are being difficult!" she responded impatiently. "Of course it would be wrong for someone to think that they can have my husband sexually. You know what I'm talking about - same sex!"

"So," I stated tentatively, "in your estimation, an inclusive church is simply a church where people can practice sex with people of the same gender and be told that it's perfectly normal."

"Well, not exactly. Only as long as they're wired that way, and then it would be okay, I think."

"Three problems here," I said, as gently as I could. "One - there is no scientific evidence whatsoever that anyone is 'wired' that way. There is opinion, but no scientific evidence. While we do know about chromosomes and gender determination, we do NOT know about a gay gene - after extensive searching, no gay gene has been found. We really don't know why some people prefer same-sex relationships. It's possible that some were taught that way as children, that some were curious and got into the life style; that some craved a lost relationship with a parent; and that some do not remember a time when they were not drawn to same-sex relationships. That's the first problem - we don't know what causes it. The second problem is that, even if some may be 'wired' that way, that does not mean therefore that homosexual activity is an acceptable alternative lifestyle. It looks like some people are 'wired' to be lifelong pedophiles; some are 'wired' to have many sexual relationships at the same time; some are

'wired' to have an ongoing sexual relationship with both genders at the same time. Does being inclusive mean that there are no sexual standards beyond how one is 'wired?'

The Church has always tried to be compassionate and inclusive. But it does have a teaching responsibility. It has to hold up standards in a compassionate way...or there will be no standards at all. And the third major problem is that our Scriptures and Tradition hold up only heterosexual relationships as honorable. The whole theme of the bible (not just a few proof texts) about sexual activity is that it is a gift of God to be shared between a man and a woman in a covenanted relationship.

What I'm saying is that we are inclusive, in that all are welcome to come worship, accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and be a part of the family. But just as a nuclear family has a teaching responsibility, so does the Church. We need to, in a loving but firm way, teach the ethics and morals of the Historic Church, and raise up leaders who will model that behavior. To use a trite phrase: we need to love and welcome the seeker after truth, but not honor lifestyles that do not honor Christ. If we REALLY love seekers as Jesus loves them, we need to be teaching them and assisting them to break free from lifestyles that enslave them. And teachings from the scriptures are really the authoritative way we can do that. THAT is what really makes us an inclusive, loving Church."

"Thank you," she said, as she continued her work, pondering these things deep in her heart and mind.

HEALING MINISTRY

St. Michael and All Angels has been blessed in many ways through the ministry of Healing. Many people, both members of our congregation and visitors, have experienced the Healing Power of God through the ministry of our prayer teams. This ministry, in the past, has also been instrumental in drawing people to St. Michaels as members. We currently have four people available for healing ministry during communion at the 10:30 service, and on Healing Sunday, normally the third Sunday of each month.

Some members of our congregation, as well as visitors, have come forth to testify how God has blessed them with healing. Many also feel strongly that their blessing of healing was a result of our Lord working through various members of the team. In addition to offering up prayers for healing, and depending on the circumstances, prayers may also request strength, patience, peace, wisdom or understanding for those seeking healing. The members of the healing team try to rely on God's prompting to guide us as we pray.

Currently, our prayer team consists of Buff Crofts, Bruce von Hasseln, Carolyn Flynn and Bob Weekley. We would love to have you join us to assist in this important ministry, especially if you attend the 8:00 service. Experience is not necessary as training is provided. Please contact Bob Weekley at 897-3722 or Fr. Grist if you are interested in serving on the Healing Team.

MISDIRECTED APPETITES

Why are we not naturally conformed to God's love? Our appetites have been misdirected, leading us to believe that there is a contradiction between God's glory and our own happiness, that we cannot submit our lives to God and still have what we really want. "The 'original' sin is not primarily that man has 'disobeyed' God; the sin is that he ceased to be hungry for God and God alone," wrote the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann. "The only real fall of man is his non-eucharistic life in a non-eucharistic world."

In *The Silver Chair* a young girl named Jill Pole meets Aslan, but she is afraid of being eaten as Hwin is eager to be eaten. Aslan stands between Jill and a stream when she is desperately thirsty, and she tries to exact a promise from the great Lion who has invited her to drink. "Will you promise not to – do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill. (We each of us hope that we can receive God on our own terms, and that he will not do anything too radical to us.) "I make no promise," replies the Lion. Jill is (unlike Hwin) afraid she will lose her autonomy. –David Fagerberg from "Between Heaven and Earth" in Touchstone Magazine (April, 2004). Used with permission.

CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION

The Bishop has indicated that St. Michael's may avail itself of the ministry of Bishop Keith Ackermann who is coming to St. Bartholomew's this fall for Confirmation.

If you have never been Confirmed (which is the official way of becoming an Episcopalian and publicly proclaiming your faith in Jesus) please contact Fr. Roger immediately to discuss the plans for this fall.

WELCOME

Lesta Ammons has officially transferred to us from St. Michael's Church in Virginia. Please Welcome her when you meet her.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

2 C. Gardinier II	15 Andy Herd
3 Donna Strain	15 Marge Preston
3 Paul Zackey	17 Estelle Hund
7 Betsy Zimmerman	18 Judy Eckle
9 Marion Wohlford	20 Don Boye
10 Charles Infantino	22 D.Moghabghab
12 Marge Lang	22 Peter VanLente
12 Ruth Hutchison	29 Shirley Szen
14 Norm Hambridge	31 Tim Thompson
7/7 – Joan & Brian Webster	
7/15 – Diane & Timothy Meacham	
7/19 – Kelly & Glenn Mogavero	
7/30 – Gladys & Harold Meacham	
7/30 – Janice & Michael Rickard	

NOTICE

There will be NO Administration or Worship Team Meetings in July.

PENCE CANS

A reminder that Pence Can Funds are used for many small and large expenses around the parish, such as roof, snow blower, etc. and that every penny helps in providing for the "extras" necessary. In May, we received \$270.00, so you see, the pennies do add up! There are extra Pence Boxes (cans) available in the Narthex and we will be counting them again before the summer is over. *Elizabeth Walker*

FROM MARGE LANG

THANK YOU to all my St. Michael's "Family" for the wonderful Retirement Party, the cards, flowers and thoughts expressed. It has been my pleasure and privilege to play for the services throughout the years. May God bless all of you.

Marge Lang

WHY ARE FIRE TRUCKS RED? Or WHAT IS THE 4TH COMMANDMENT?

Why are fire trucks red? Well, fire trucks have four wheels and eight men; everybody knows that four plus eight equals twelve. There are twelve inches in a foot, and a foot is a ruler. Queen Elizabeth II is a ruler, and also the name of the largest ship on the seven seas. Seas have fish and fish have fins. Fins fought the Russians. Russians were 'Reds.' Fire trucks are always rushin'. Therefore, fire trucks are red.

If our think this is wild, you ought to hear some people try to explain why they do not come to church! *Source unknown.*

The logic expressed in the above piece is somewhat bizarre, to say the least. But it does make a point, which is that we human beings are very creative when it comes to reasons for not honoring the Fourth Commandment, **"Remember that thou shall keep holy the Sabbath day"** (BCP 318).

We finally are entering into much welcomed warm weather. School is out; families will take well-earned vacations, picnic together, and get away to various beaches and parks for relaxation.

It is a given that the above list has a place, has a priority in our lives, but so does God. I have shared with many who visit my office that for the Christian the order of priority is God, family, and church. Notice God is listed first, for **"You shall love the Lord God with all your heart, and with**

all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). We are to love God with our total being, placing Him first in all that we do, especially on the Sabbath. All else, all our business, in God's eyes is of secondary importance.

It is so easy for us, and most especially for families, to allow the pressure of maintaining family schedules of the world to creep or come boldly into our lives. Time for God – only when convenient or able to fit into the busy schedule?

"What is the duty of all Christians?" *The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God"* (BCP 856).

We have been taught from our Sunday School days through our Catechism that God expects us to worship Him weekly and to give generously for the work of the church.

May you enjoy a refreshing and pleasant summer, but not at the expense of reduced priority of worshipping and giving thanks to God in His Church. You are priority number one in God the Father's eyes. Just ask His Son! *Father Richard Molison, Rector St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Lockport in The Beacon Newsletter, June 2004.*

AN OLD PRAYER

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, the fires of life over and our work done. Then Lord in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, holy rest and peace at last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Author unknown.

WOMEN'S GUILD

The Women's Guild wound up their spring season June 2nd with our Roast Beef Luncheon and Auction. There were about 40 people present and a profit of about \$110.00 was realized. We thank all who generously donated rolls, horseradish, salad, cake, etc. The Garden Fund was richer by over \$100., so we feel it was well worth the effort.

Pat Jarosz donated a 4th of July basket for a raffle on June 27th in time for the Independence Day Celebration.

We won't be meeting in July and August, so come back in September refreshed and with some ideas for our Fall and Winter programs. Don't forget Project Christmas Child and start assembling articles for your shoebox gifts.

Have a great summer and stay well, keeping the St. Michael's Family in your prayers. Love, *Virginia Bradley, President*

UNITED THANK OFFERING

Again this spring, St. Michael's showed their thankfulness for God's Blessings by presenting an offering of \$828. which will be forwarded to the National Board of UTO for distribution. Various Parishes and projects present their requests for grants which are voted on for mission in the U.S. and abroad.

Keep praying thankfully each day and the Lord will richly bless us because we are "doing it unto the least of His children." Blue boxes are available in the Narthex or from the Ushers. *V. Bradley, Co-ordinator*

GET OUT OF THE PEWS!

Scientists have long known that we use only a small portion of our intellectual capabilities. Consider what might happen if we used just a little bit more – or even all – of our latent mental abilities.

Civilization would be much further along than it is now. Technology, inventions, science and medicine all would be more advanced. Education would be improved. Music and art would be drastically enhanced and more enjoyable.

In fact, the quality of life we now have would make a quantum leap forward if we would just implement more – let alone all – of the mind's abilities. Just think of it.

What if...?

The longer a person lives, the greater the possibility becomes of his being haunted by those words – *What if?* We begin to think, *What if I would have done this or not done that?* The good news is that for any follower of Jesus, *What if?* Becomes more of a challenge than a regret.

I know of a congregation that was challenged by their pastor to do four simple things (for only a month) to consecrate themselves for the coming year. He asked them to pray every day, fast one day a week, tithe and bring one unsaved person a week to church.

That doesn't sound overly demanding. It's as if the church were being asked to act like Christians.

Nonetheless, the result was an unprecedented breakthrough in the life of this church. God's presence marked the services in an increased way. Financial breakthroughs came for ministry projects and proposed buildings. In addition, church members entered a phenomenal season of harvesting lost souls into God's kingdom.

Now, I'm not proposing a dogmatic four-step breakthrough plan. What's important is to understand what the Bible says: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:9, NKJV). This church demonstrates the truth that with a little extra prayer and faith based action on

our part, God responds in a much greater way.

What if we were to use everything God has given us to reach our own part of the world with the gospel? What might happen?

Isaiah 58:10 offers an interesting answer: “If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness and your darkness shall be as the noonday.”

“Extend” my soul? What could that mean?”

How about stretching beyond a knee-jerk reaction to a sermon that calls us to reach others with the gospel?

What if we actually stopped being obsessive-compulsive about our position in the current religious infrastructure and focused instead on changing our neighborhoods? *What if* we didn’t just say we are willing to do whatever it takes to reach the continuously mushrooming number of unchurched people in America but actually were to do whatever it takes?

Consider what God says about you if you truly extend your soul to reach others.

He will use you. He says: “Your light shall dawn in the darkness (v.10). If you will *s-t-r-e-t-c-h* yourself a little more, maybe even adjust your thinking and theology, you will experience the wondrous joy of making a difference where it counts.

He will meet your needs. He says: “Your darkness shall be as the noonday” (v.10). The circumstances you face will fade away, or even disappear, if you reach beyond your own situation and bring Christ’s love to others. My wife and I have practiced this truth a number of times and seen God’s promises come true.

This year is still young, with plenty of time to rearrange some priorities so you can reach your community with the gospel

more than ever before. *What if* you decided today to change, to make this the time in your life when you make a difference?

What if?

Scott Hinkle, Charisma Magazine, March 2004