

The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish Petersburg, Virginia

March 2010

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

I love the season of Lent. I have always loved the season of Lent. Not because I am any good at repenting or very much enjoy contemplating my sinful ways, but for all the warm and wonderful memories I have associated with past Lenten seasons, particularly those of my childhood.

Though I was not ever aware of it as a child, I grew up in "a church plant" – a congregation that formed just a few years before I was born. My father's sister and my God-mother were two of the principle lay leaders in this brand new church. My family was involved in nearly every aspect of St. Christopher's in Gladwyne. My father served on the Vestry as Junior Warden and also volunteered as the Church Treasurer for many years. My mother worked on the Altar Guild, taught Sunday School, and made sure I attended Youth Group meetings. Parish Suppers during Lent were always a great treat for me because the food was good of course, but my parents would lose track of me and my friends for an hour or more while they talked amongst their friends. We played wide-ranging games of Hide 'n' Seek, Sardines, and Kick-the-Can. I can still remember fifteen or twenty of us hiding in the coat closet and smelling the moth balls emanating from the fur coats!

Every once in awhile we even had some pretty serious conversations amongst ourselves that were probably prompted by the words of the Lenten Guest Speaker: "Do we really have to give up something for Lent?"

Yes! Think of what Jesus gave up for forty days in the wilderness!" "What do you think the Devil looks like? I think he looks like all the things you want to do, but everyone else says you can't do." "Do we have to give up everything for Lent? No. But why should I keep on doing something even when I'm thinking about giving it up for Lent?"

Over the years since my childhood, I have made the rounds from being "pretty strict" about self-denial to being "pretty loosey-goosey" and back again. I have also taken on difficult disciplines for Lent and found myself quite relieved finally to arrive at Easter morning. In my "middle age" which may be rapidly tending towards my "old age," I have begun to value those spiritual practices that are all about simplicity. I don't want to create a focus on the habit I'm trying to break or an obsessive amount of attention on the new behavior I'm trying to adopt. I'd rather hope that my Lenten discipline would draw me into a deeper relationship with God so that as the seasons of Lent accumulate in my life, I am ascending an upward spiral towards God. I know that God wishes for me to draw closer to him and that the distance between us is of my own making. My intention then as I get older and hopefully at least a little bit wiser is that my Lenten discipline will become a transparent stairway that will allow me to move upwards and onwards towards God. May God bless you in the keeping of a holy Lent.

Peace, Rick

Highlights of March Events

Thursday, March 4th ~ 6:30 p.m.

Social Club gathering at Tom Raines' home. All are welcome!

Sunday, March 14th ~ Lent IV

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m.

Morning Prayer at 10:30 a.m.

Vestry Meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Evensong at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 28th ~ Palm Sunday

Holy Eucharist Rite I at 8:00 a.m.

Holy Eucharist Rite II at 10:30 a.m.

beginning with the Liturgy of the Palms

Lenten Program Continues

There is still time to join with those of us at St. Paul's who are reading a very thought-provoking book by Rob Bell and Don Golden entitled *"Jesus Wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto for the Church in Exile."* We are meeting every Wednesday night after Compline to discuss the next chapter of this book that addresses the whole of Scripture from a very different perspective than that which we normally use. Rob Bell is the founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His first book, *Velvet Elvis, Repainting the Christian Faith* is well worth reading as well. Don Golden is senior vice-president of church engagement at World Relief in Baltimore, Maryland and a former lead pastor at Mars Hill. These two men provide a very broad interpretative overview of a compelling theme in the Bible: the cycle from slavery to redemption to exile to return that is embedded in our Judeo-Christian history. The reading itself is not difficult or cumbersome, but the spiritual response to it is demanding and significant. The book will take a bit more than the six weeks of Lent to finish, but I think everyone will benefit from the time invested in the undertaking. Participants are encouraged to buy their own copy of the book, but Xeroxed copies will be made available. The outline of the first five weeks is as follows.

Mar. 3rd – Chapter One: The Cry of the Oppressed

Mar. 10th – Chapter Two: Get Down Your Harps

Mar. 17th – Chapter Three: David's Other Son

Mar. 24th – Chapter Four: Genital-Free Africans

Mar. 31st – Chapter Five: Swollen-bellied Black Babies, Soccer Moms on Prozac, and the Mark of the Beast

The Importance of Holy Week

With the arrival of Palm Sunday on the last Sunday of March, we begin the intense, but spiritually uplifting time known in the Church as Holy Week. Those folks who simply go directly from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday miss out on all the drama, pageantry, and power of Holy Week – the intervening days of the week that include Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The Liturgical Planning Committee would very much like to encourage all the members of the St. Paul's worshipping community to make a special effort this year to attend the services offered on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

Maundy Thursday commemorates the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Holy Eucharist, or Holy Communion, when Jesus said at the Last Supper, "Do this (the Latin word used is *mandare*) in remembrance of me." We celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday because Jesus commanded us to do so. This service ends with the stripping of the altar and chancel in preparation for the stark service of Good Friday the next day.

Good Friday is the very solemn vigil at the foot of the cross in which we struggle to come to grips with the depth and extent of the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Yes, this is "strong stuff," but the glory amid light and wonder of Easter is so much greater when we have walked through the shadows of Maundy Thursday and the darkness of Good Friday. Stretch your heart and deepen your faith experience by joining us for both of these important services during Holy Week.

The ECW Throws a Great Tea Party!

Linda Maclin, Linda Wynne, and Kitty Hatcher had a wonderful idea: "Why not revitalize the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) of St. Paul's? Let's make sure that no one has to carry too heavy a burden. Let's get together to do interesting and creative things that are really exciting. Let's just have some fun together and see what happens!"

The first thing to happen was an absolutely fabulous Tea Party hosted by Mark Ragland who could have talked for six hours about all the fascinating aspects of growing, brewing, drinking, buying, and enjoying tea, but instead thoroughly entertained everyone present for ninety minutes. Did you know that there are tea leaves harvested by monkeys? Have you ever seen a box of individual tea leaves tied up into little spheres in the shape of pearls? Did you realize that the hundreds of different types of tea all come from the one and only tea plant known as *Camellia sinensis*? If you ever get the chance to hear Mark's presentation anywhere, do not miss out on a very, very enjoyable experience!

This first gathering of the ECW was a great success! Everyone is looking forward to the next opportunity to get together. Be on the lookout for your invitation!

Short-term Mission Team to Continue Meeting

We have finally heard more details from Sister Jean Gabriel in the Dominican Republic! In a recent e-mail, Sister Jean has let us know that the Sisters "are remodeling a small building to use as part of the preschool. We also need to do walls around the perimeter and move some playground equipment." We will need to send her a list of the skills that our team will be able to provide so that we can be matched up with a suitable project. Sister Jean also mentioned that there would be Youth leaders who would be conducting a Bible School with Spanish materials, if we had some folks who were willing to help out with that activity. We will continue to meet at "the Dominican Republic table" during Wednesday Night dinner in order to hear the latest news and answer any questions. The next gathering will be on Wednesday, March 24th. See you there!

Concerts by Candlelight

Every second Friday of the month as part of Petersburg's *Friday for the Arts*.

Friday, March 12th ~ 6:30 p.m.

Virginia Benefit Chorale
Steve Davis, Director

Friday, April 9th ~ 6:30 p.m.

Eastern Virginia Brass Ensemble

Friday, May 14th ~ 6:30 p.m.

Mike Goldberg Trio

Donations to the Whittle Music & Arts Fund are gratefully accepted. Please look for the yellow envelopes and place them in the plate at the door. *These contributions fully support St. Paul's Music Ministry in downtown Petersburg.*

Bruton Parish Candlelight Concert

at Bruton Parish, Williamsburg

Tuesday, March 9th – 8:00 p.m.

Sarah Motley, Soprano
Charles Lindsey, Jr., Organ & Harpsichord

Little Notes from You

Dear St. Paul's,

Thank you all so much for remembering me with the darling Valentine card and Valentine socks!

God Bless Everyone,
Dollie Rogers

March Birthdays

4th Paden Vargo
5th West Cuthbert
8th Rick Greenwood
13th Heath Thompson
14th Maria Booth
16th Max Haynie
17th Elizabeth Chandler
18th Dollie Rogers
22nd Jack Keeler
29th Ashleigh Tuck
31st Derek Nelson

March Anniversaries

28th David & Susan Wells