



Revelations

October 2006

Volume 25, No. 8

St. John's Episcopal Church, Sturgis, Michigan

Bringing God and people together to know and live the Good News of Jesus Christ

October Highlights

October 1 (Sunday) 17th Sunday after Pentecost **8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist**

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course
4:00 pm Blessing of the Animals
(Feast of St. Francis)

October 4 (Wednesday)

12:00 noon St. John's Guild
"Reflections on China": Derek and Pam Smith
Eucharist and Luncheon

October 5 (Thursday)

7:00 pm Daughters of the King (Thurston Woods)

October 7 (Saturday)

8:30 am - 12:30 pm
Small Church Conference - Kalamazoo
"How can we embrace change?" Contact office.

October 7 (Saturday) 18th Sunday after Pentecost

5:00 pm "Seeker's Service" (Great Hall)
and informal Potluck

October 8 (Sunday) 18th Sunday after Pentecost **8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist**

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course

October 10 (Tuesday)

1:00 pm Bishop's Bible Study for Clergy

October 12 (Thursday)

Conference: Michigan Interfaith Power and Light

October 13 (Friday)

Wedding Rehearsal

October 14 (Saturday)

4:30 pm Wedding: Kara Clemens and Steve Hahn

October 15 (Sunday) 19th Sunday after Pentecost

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course

October 21 (Saturday)

All day: Diocesan Convention (Cathedral)

October 22 (Sunday) 20th Sunday after Pentecost

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course

October 24 (Tuesday)

7:00 pm Vestry Meeting

October 28 (Saturday)

8:30 am - 2:30 pm **Alpha** "Holy Spirit Retreat Day

October 29 (Sunday) 21st Sunday after Pentecost

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course

Less gall

Leaner living

Meredith



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- 02- Chris & Sarah Mildenberg
- 14- James & Michelle Kauffman
- 19- Charles & Julie Stutesman

OCTOBER 2006



CALL TO CONVENTION

In accordance with the Canons of the Diocese of Western Michigan
 (Title I, Canon 2, Section 3),
 you are hereby notified of the
 132nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Western Michigan,
 which will be held in Portage, Michigan,
 on Saturday **October 21, 2006**,
 the Right Reverend Robert R. Gepert presiding.



Altar Flowers



NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

November 1 (Wednesday) All Saint's Day

12:00 noon St. John's Guild
"Icons" Anne Davidson
Eucharist and Luncheon

November 2 (Thursday)

7:00 pm Daughters of the King (Thurston Woods)

November 4 (Saturday) All Saint's (transferred)

5:00 pm Come as you are "Seeker's Service" (Great Hall)
and informal Potluck

November 5 (Sunday) All Saint's (transferred)

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Adult Christian Education only
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course

November 9 (Thursday)

12:00 noon Sturgis Ministerial Association Meeting

November 12 (Sunday) 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Sunday School
Adult Christian Education
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course
Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Retreat for Rector
(Sunday evening through Tuesday)

November 19 (Sunday) 24th Sunday after Pentecost

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages
12:30 pm **Alpha** Course: Last meeting

November 22 (Wednesday) Thanksgiving Eve

7:00 pm Holy Eucharist and Food Collection

November 23 (Thursday) Thanksgiving Day

Office closed.

November 24 (Friday)

Office closed

November 26 (Sunday) Christ the King

8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

9:00 am Christian Education - all ages

November 28 (Tuesday)

7:00 pm Vestry Meeting



Province V

May 4-6, 2007

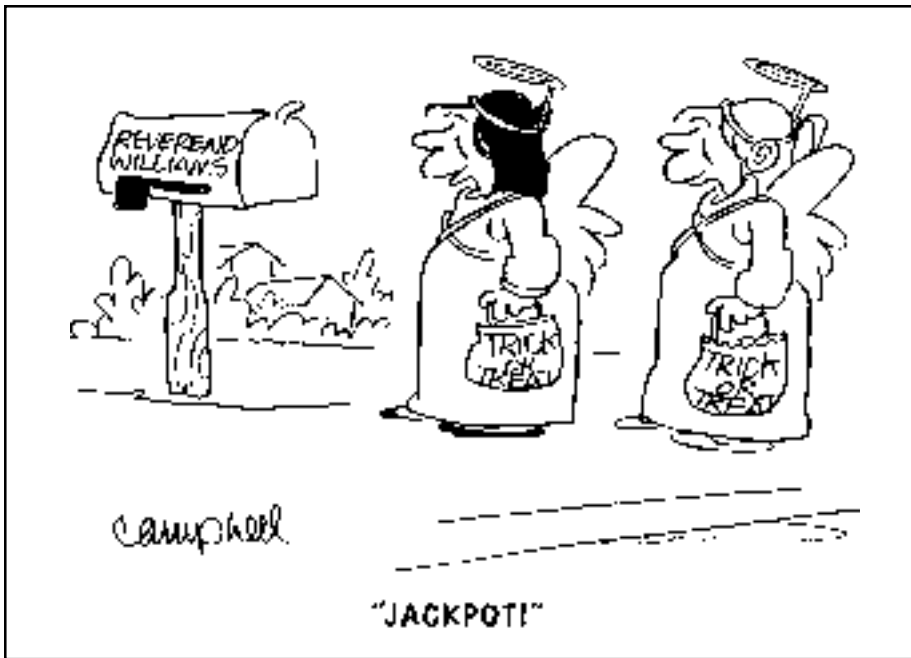
**GRAND HOTEL
Mackinac Island, MI**

The Diocese of Western Michigan will be hosting the annual Province V meeting at the Grand Hotel on beautiful Mackinac Island in May 2007.

The theme of the meeting is, "Empowering Women." We are delighted to have keynote speaker Rev. Joy E. Rogers for the event.

Plans for interesting workshops will be announced later.

The cost of double occupancy is \$250. Single rooms are \$350. A deposit of \$100 must be received by November 1 to reserve your spot \$100.



A LOOK AT OUR WEEK

Sunday
 8:00 am Holy Eucharist
 9:05 am Adult Christian Education
 10:00 am Holy Eucharist

Monday – Thursday
 Office Hours 10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Tuesday
 5:00 pm Women’s Book Study (Church)

Wednesday
 7:00 am Holy Eucharist then breakfast
 7:00 pm Choir rehearsal
 7:00 pm Men’s Bible Study (home group)

Friday
 11:30 am Free Friday Friendship Meal

First Saturday of the month
 5:00 pm “Seeker’s Service”

- St. John’s Episcopal Church Staff and Phone Extensions-

The Reverend Canon Meredith HuntRector (ext. 102)
 Ruth Lahmeyer.....Director of Music
 Laura Kurella.....Business Office (ext. 100)
 Paul Currier.....Sexton (ext. 103)

Office Hours: Monday -Thursday 10:30 am - 2:30 pm - Phone (269) 651-5811 - Fax (269) 651-7178

St. John’s Episcopal Church
 110 S. Clay Street
 Sturgis, Michigan 49091-1711
www.stjohnssturgis.org



Daylight savings time ends
October 29.
 Please remember
 to set your clocks **BACK** 1 hour





Stewardship in a Time OF INSTABILITY

By Gary Nicolosi

The Episcopal Church is in crisis. You may approve or disapprove of the actions by General Convention. You may like or dislike where the church is headed. You may rejoice or be disheartened by the election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as our next Presiding Bishop. You may be saddened or couldn't care less that The Episcopal Church may be relegated to second-class status in the Anglican Communion. Whatever your view on issues and wherever you stand on the theological spectrum, one thing is clear: The Episcopal Church is in transition. It is not what it used to be, but what it will be is not yet fully clear.

Author Joan Didion once remarked, "When the ground starts shaking, all bets are off." We all have a bit of the shakes as new doubts replace old certainties. What we thought would never happen is now all too much a reality: that churches and even dioceses will go their separate ways. Episcopalians, of whatever label, seem anxious, uneasy, unsettled, and even angry that the church they love has somehow betrayed them, or been insensitive to them, or turned its back on them. These feelings seem as prevalent here in the Diocese of Newark as they must be in the

Diocese of Fort Worth. Quite simply, Episcopalians today are living with enormous cognitive dissonance in which our symbols of stability are collapsing around us.

So how do parishes develop an effective fall stewardship campaign in these turbulent times? There is urgency about this question. After the 2003 General Convention many parishes suffered steep declines in their pledges. How can we prevent the same thing from happening again?

One of the things we have learned about parish stewardship in the last decade is that people not only have a need to give, but also they give to a need. In other words, even if people are fully committed to their need to give as reflective of God's image in them, they still must be convinced to give to a specific need. The parish must make the case why members should direct the majority of their donating dollars to the local church. If that case cannot be made, or if it is made ineffectually, then it is likely that over time a church will either plateau in pledges or even decline.

The question thus becomes, How do you make the case that Episcopalians should continue and even increase their contributions to the local church in these turbulent times?

The answer may seem counterintuitive. We should

not shy away from the Episcopal label but affirm it all the more. We need to focus on the Episcopal way of being Christian — a way that transcends liberal and conservative ideologies but is inclusive of both.

When the first President George Bush spoke of a “kinder, gentler America,” I immediately thought of a “kinder, gentler” Christianity. It’s called The Episcopal Church. Yes, The Episcopal Church can seem confused, uncertain, sometimes messy, at times stumbling, but almost always it is profoundly pastoral.

Pastoral is the key word here. At our best we are a pastoral church that blesses rather than curses; affirms rather than condemns; a church that counts people in rather than kicks people out; a church that is always willing to expand its circle of love just a little bit more so that no one is ever shut out. I am not referring only to gays and lesbians here. Think how many of our parishioners are divorced and remarried, yet are members in good standing; or struggle with questions of faith but still find acceptance; or have had an abortion without automatically being excommunicated; or are living together without being married, yet are welcomed to receive Holy Communion; or have been ministered to and cared for in times of crisis, despite their marginal status as church members.

There are many examples of how the very inclusiveness of this church allows love to seep through. Most of our parishioners probably have known that love — at a baby’s baptism, at the reception of Holy Communion, at the marriage of a son or daughter, at the death of a loved one, in times of sickness and confusion, in a nursing home or hospital bed, the church is there for its people — praying for them, blessing

them? No! As a parish priest, I don’t have to resolve the conflicts over human sexuality or the battle for the Bible, or the place of The Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion. Each of these issues will be resolved in God’s good time and in God’s own way. What I can say to my congregation is this: “Because I believe in this Episcopal way of being Christian, which is reflected in our parish life together, I can unreservedly and unapologetically ask for your sacrificial financial support. I hope you will join me in making this parish more than it is — more biblical, more faithful, more inclusive, more relevant, more Christ-centered, friendlier, larger, and more gospel-oriented. For this I know: When the church loves the world as Jesus did, then the world somehow becomes a little more of what God created it to be. After all, if we fail in love, we fail in all things else. Love is the mission. All other matters are secondary.”

In her book, *Traveling Mercies*, author Ann Lamott tells a story about a 7-year-old girl who became lost one day. She ran up and down the streets of the big town where she lived, but she couldn’t find a single landmark. She was frightened. Finally, a policeman stopped to help her. He put her in the passenger seat of his car and they drove around until she finally saw her church. She pointed it out to the policeman, and then she said in a firm voice, “You could leave me off now. This is my church, and I can always find my way home from here.”

That is what we need to say to our people — that no matter the intrigues of ecclesiastical politics or the pronouncements of this bishop or that — compassionate and caring ministry will continue to take place at the local church where Christ is proclaimed, lives

At our best we are a pastoral church.

them, comforting them, anointing them with oil, pardoning their sins, and strengthening them for the journey ahead.

This is The Episcopal Church at its best — what the church is called to do and does so well — being a pastoral presence in the world. And this is how most of our people experience the church, as that community where God’s amazing grace and unconditional love touch lives. That is why, despite the rumblings about the actions of General Convention or the statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury, most of our people want the church not only to survive but thrive — not only for their own needs but for the sakes of their children and grandchildren as well as their friends and neighbors.

So what about the issues that divide us? Don’t they make common cause and common mission impossi-

ble? No! As a parish priest, I don’t have to resolve the conflicts over human sexuality or the battle for the Bible, or the place of The Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion. Each of these issues will be resolved in God’s good time and in God’s own way. What I can say to my congregation is this: “Because I believe in this Episcopal way of being Christian, which is reflected in our parish life together, I can unreservedly and unapologetically ask for your sacrificial financial support. I hope you will join me in making this parish more than it is — more biblical, more faithful, more inclusive, more relevant, more Christ-centered, friendlier, larger, and more gospel-oriented. For this I know: When the church loves the world as Jesus did, then the world somehow becomes a little more of what God created it to be. After all, if we fail in love, we fail in all things else. Love is the mission. All other matters are secondary.”

As The Episcopal Church faces the challenge of being a church in transition ministering in a rapidly changing world, we need to get back to basics and focus on who we are: a profoundly pastoral church that expresses the largeness of God’s love. Build your stewardship campaign on that strength, and the rest will follow, for it goes to the very heart of who we are as Episcopalians. □

The Rev. Gary Nicolosi is the rector of St. Peter’s Church, Morristown, N.J.