

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness
Copake Falls, New York
May 2012

Celebrating 160 Years – 1852 to 2012

Thought from the Wilderness

“Friendship heightens the joys of prosperity and mitigates the sorrows of adversity by dividing and sharing them. Hence, the best medicine in life is a friend.” (Aelred of Rievaulx from his 12th century classic, *Spiritual Friendship*). We all need friends. In fact according to Aelred it's the best medicine in life!

In some ways many of us have more friends than ever, facilitated by social networking sites like *facebook* (and others) bringing people together online. This can be good. We have to connect in the first place for any potential friendship to develop. Aelred writes of spiritual friendship, that is one based on love. One might love one's *facebook* friends, but if you have hundreds of them, you won't have time to develop a deep friendship with most of them. This is not necessarily a problem as long as we have a few, or maybe one or two friendships of depth.

The world, and in some ways American culture in particular, makes it challenging to

develop deep or spiritual friendships. Our culture is often fast-paced and competitive, which can isolate us from each other even if we are surrounded by people. Biblical scholar and spiritual writer Eugene Peterson says, "Each of us has contact with



hundreds of people who never look beyond our surface appearance. We have dealings with hundreds of people who the moment they set eyes on us begin calculating what use we can be to them, what they can get out of us. We meet hundreds of people who take one look at us, make a snap judgment, and then slot us into a category so that they won't have to deal with us as persons. They treat us as something less than we are; and if we're in constant association with them, we become less.

And then someone enters into our life who isn't looking for someone to use, is leisurely enough to find out what's really going on in us, is secure enough not to exploit our weaknesses or attack our strengths, recognizes our inner life and understands the difficulty of living out our

inner convictions, confirms what is deepest within us. A friend." (*Leap over a Wall*, p.54).

E-mailing, texting, and social networking can be good, but they're not as personal as, well, a phone call. A phone call can be yet more personal when we see the other (as in *Skyping* -- a personalizing use of technology!). But being physically present to the other is the most (potentially) personal way of being together and of experiencing friendship. Potentially but not necessarily; as Eugene Peterson says above, we may have (face-to-face) contact with hundreds of people who *don't* care about us.

Considering that friendships take time (leisure, as Peterson says) and ideally the physical presence of the other, we are blessed to have even a small number of good friendships.

Jesus tells us in today's Gospel (I write on the sixth Sunday of Easter) that, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer... but... friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (*John 15:15*). What we can authentically develop with a small number of people on earth (friendship), Jesus, as God's Son, offers now to everyone. That is, a personal, open, loving, and trusting relationship. Aelred says that God as the divine third is integral to our best human friendships. The even better news, according to Aelred, is that in heaven, like God, and by God's grace, our capacity for friendship will be increased exponentially and we will have many deep friendships.

On earth, where true or spiritual friendship takes time to develop, Aelred recommends we consider four criteria:

1) Purity of intention, that is, "what are our deeper motives?"

2) The direction of reason, that is, "Do we treat the other reasonably or do we just use him or

her?"

3) The restraint of moderation, that is, "Are we too intrusive of this person's otherness, or are we moderate about the demands we make on him or her?"

4) Valuing the friend's love in itself, that is, "Do we value this relationship as gift, or are we seeking some reward other than the friendship itself?" (Descriptions are from Patricia Carroll, OCSO, a contemporary Trappist nun in Ireland).

Aelred says that primary qualities in a good friend include loyalty, discretion, and patience.

Let's then slow down a bit, and accept the friendship of God in Jesus by taking the time to abide in him (as he also says in today's Gospel). And paradoxically, by doing what he commands -- which is to accept his love, love ourselves, and love others. Paradoxically because normally friendship is between equals (who don't command each other), between people who treat each other as infinitely loved children of God. But since we are not equal to God, we are his "servants in terms of ministry" and his "friends in terms of intimacy" (*Living the Good News, Adult Leaders Guide, Spring 2012, p. 75*).

Yet even in a good friendship between equals, friends look for ways to 'serve' each other -- humbly and out of love, trusting that the other will not take advantage of their service.

Let's be glad and grateful for the good friends in our lives -- gifts from God. And let's meditate on the meaning of true friendship as wisely described by Aelred, and as modeled and shared with us by Jesus.

In peace, John+

A Voice in the Wilderness

Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

Please send submissions including news of church members to peterlouise@gmail.com

Upcoming issues:

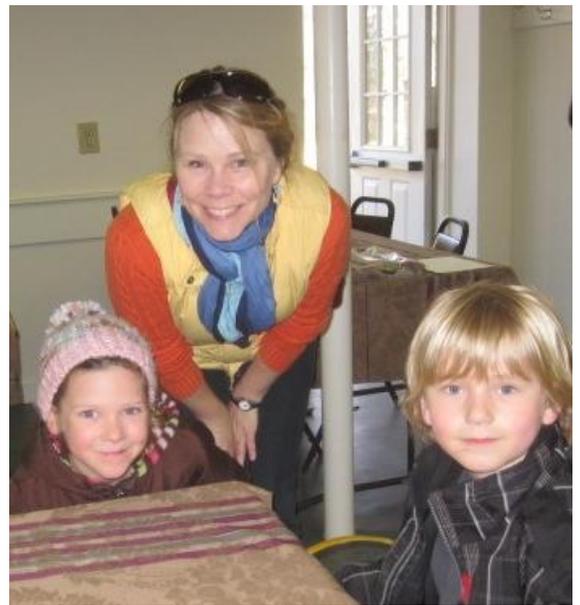
2012: July 8 (*Country Fair*), September 16, November 18.

2013: January 27.

Please submit reports, articles and news items two weeks prior to the issue date. Thanks!



Easter Egg
Hunt
2012



From the Desk of the Senior Warden

Happy Spring everyone. St. John's is enjoying a wonderful "uptick" in attendance. We are seeing new faces every week and the Sunday school has been alive with the chatter of little people. It is all very exciting.

We have hosted several events that have gone well and have two major events coming up, The Handbell Concert, Saturday May 19th at 7 pm and our 160th anniversary celebration on June 24th. Keep an eye on the Sunday Bulletin for details.

The Vestry has been discussing the creation of a new committee for Activities and Community Outreach. The purpose of the committee would be keeping track of the various things that we already

do, considering things that are suggested to us and finding worthwhile projects for which we as a church community can be of help. If this sounds appealing to any of you, please give me a call at 329-1401. We are also in need of a volunteer to become the Chairman of the churchyard. This position involves preparing for burials and otherwise overseeing the use and care of the churchyard above the church. Again, anyone who might find this interesting, please call me at the number above. See you in church.

*As ever,
Elen Freeston, Warden*

2012 Country Fair and Auction

The tent is rented, the auctioneer engaged and we are on our way to the 2012 Country Fair and Auction on July 14th and Pork Barbecue on July 15th. It will be upon us in the blink of an eye. It is time to go through the house and see what gently used things are begging to be moved along to a new home.

If you have perennials that need thinning, it is the perfect time to cull some into pots for sale at the fair. Jewelry seems to remain popular and sorting out the jewelry boxes and sending some to

the fair will be welcome. We will be setting up "lot boxes" again this year so some small items will be accepted but must be clean, in good repair, and desirable. Homemade preserves and baked goods are always appreciated by our Country Fair and Auction patrons. Your continued support has enabled this event to be the centerpiece of our capital raising efforts for many years and will remain so for many years to come.

Elen Freeston

A Portrait of Fr John

In thinking about the writing of John's profile for the Voice, I remembered the autobiography he sent the Search Committee as part of the application process for rector at St. John's. So, here it is, slightly abridged, in his own words. In reflection, we are so glad that he felt called to become our rector and that we were willing and able to participate in this calling. There is a new liveliness of spirit at St. John's (aided by his thoughtful sermons, loving pastoral care of parishioners, contemplative prayer group, Bible study, growing Christian Formation for

children, outreach to the community, Jazz Vespers, etc). We are grateful for John's positive leadership in trying new approaches for our collective spiritual direction.

Lucy Eldridge

The Reverend John P. Thompson
Brief Autobiography

Milwaukee, Wisconsin is where I grew up. I am the oldest of my siblings. My parents have a genuine faith and we always attended Sunday mass (I was raised Roman Catholic). I attended

Catholic grade school and high school. I was born with a short left arm and leg. In spite of this, I attended regular schools, had many friends, and was very active -- even in sports -- while growing up. I was best at table tennis and came in third in the high school tournament.

After high school, I went off to a state college. I attended Eucharist at the Newman Center for a couple months, but then drifted away from church under the influence of some agnostic or atheist philosophy and psychology professors. I was also influenced by the typical college atmosphere. But in less than two years, I became disillusioned. I began to feel empty and alone. I called out to God in my distress -- and he was there. He was there in the form of the Bible and other inspired literature. He was also there in the people and worship of the Methodist Church I began to attend.

I loved the Methodist Church, but after less than a year I began to miss the weekly Eucharist. Even though I had left the Catholic Church initially, I went back for the Eucharist. I transferred the next fall to Cardinal Stritch College, a Franciscan college north of Milwaukee. The Eucharists I attended at both Cardinal Stritch College and Marquette University had some of the warm fellowship that I had encountered in the Methodist Church. I continued my major in psychology at Stritch and picked up a minor in religious studies.

After completing my M.A., I went to work as a social worker. I counseled chronically mentally ill adults, did substance-abuse counseling, and was a children's therapist. I also was an employment specialist where I helped to optimize the success of employees with developmental

disabilities. I did this by working with both the employees and their employers. I always saw my social work as implicit Christian ministry.

After studying church history at Franciscan University in Steubenville where I completed my M.A. (in theology), and years later, after much prayer, I felt a freedom to explore the Episcopal Church. I realized that the Episcopal Church celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy in a manner similar to the Catholic Church, while including the Protestant tradition -- the best of both worlds. At its best, it combined the best of my experiences in the Methodist and Roman Catholic traditions. So I joined the Episcopal Church.

The clearest evidence of my call to the priesthood was experienced in prayer with two other people. This call was confirmed repeatedly in the discernment process with my home parish and at the diocesan level through the positive feedback of both and the ongoing joy and excitement I felt about the process.

I attended seminary beginning in the fall of 2002 and graduated in 2005 with an M.Div.

I enjoyed seminary (at Sewanee), with, e.g., the stimulating classes and the fellowship of classmates.

...I want to add that I practice contemplative prayer or centering prayer daily and I read Scripture daily. This gives me energy to minister, and to do so (I pray) with wisdom. I also see my experience of worship, ministry, and life in parish community each contributing to my spiritual formation, my relationship with God, and making me a better minister



Beyond Copake Falls

What a spring for Anglicans! In March, the Church of England's dioceses rejected the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant. Shortly before that, ++Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, announced that he will retire at year's end to become the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Then in April, while Britons scrambled to decide who will replace ++Williams, the very conservative Global South provinces met in London and flexed their muscles, reminding the rest of us that Canterbury is not all *that* important to them. Only the most cockeyed optimist would deny that talk about Anglican schism should use the past tense.

Locally, three parishes – St. George's (Schenectady), St. Luke's (Saranac Lake), and St. John's (Essex) – have received Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight. The first is now in the pastoral care of Bishop Gladstone (“Skip”) Adams of Central New York, the others with Bishop Thomas Ely of Vermont. St. Andrew's (Albany) hopes to join them soon. DEPO parishes are obliged to meet their financial and other obligations to the Diocese of Albany. In return, they connect with a sympathetic pastor and a congenial diocese.

Province II of the Episcopal Church is also called “The International Atlantic Province” because it includes Haiti, the Virgin Islands, and the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, as well as Albany and seven other dioceses in New York and New Jersey. Marya and I met people from all of these dioceses on May 3rd and 4th at the annual Province II Synod in Colonie. In contrast to some previous meetings in Albany at which local attendees were few, this year's turnout included Bishops Love and Herzog and our General Convention deputies.

Albany's official attendees tended to sit in back and move about as a group. Eight of us from Albany Via Media, were just guests and free to mingle. On Thursday, Marya and I had lunch with +”Skip” Adams, St. George's mentor under DEPO. We found him engaging and now understand why friends at St. George's described his first

service there as a celebration. It was only after a delightful Friday lunch with Rosalie Ballentine+ of the Virgin Islands on Friday that we learned that she sits very near the top of the Episcopal Church. Bp. Provenzano of Marya's old diocese, Long Island, told her that her last priest, who left the ministry to her great disappointment, has rejoined it. We also enjoyed chatting with Bishop Beckwith of Newark about our childhood town, Teaneck, and my old parish, St. Mark's. We Albany progressives, get so little warmth in our own diocese that such contacts with the wider Church are restorative.

The cast for this Synod, a prep for the upcoming General Convention, included the Presiding Bishop, the President of the House of Deputies, and several other high caliber Episcopal guns. I took particular delight in talking with Bonnie Anderson, a friend and strong supporter of Albany Via Media, and introducing her to an AVM Board member who will orchestrate her visit to Albany this fall. I didn't get to speak with the Presiding Bishop, but a friend who did so said she urged AVM to “keep stirring.”

A Thursday afternoon workshop introduced a liturgy for same gender blessings and gave us a chance to try it out. As “witnesses,” Marya and I found the service very moving; we hope that General Convention will accept it. Several Albany deputies who were seated in the back of the room were unimpressed and refused to join in.

England's vote against the Covenant makes it unsurprising that no one at a workshop on it spoke in its favor. We focused instead on whether General Convention should just vote the Covenant down or table it while re-affirming our commitment to the Communion. As to the consequences of our spurning the Covenant, I observed that the Communion is already divided, and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (Global South) may well split further when its strange bedfellows come to realize just how strange they are.

On Thursday evening, the Bishop of Haiti, +Zache Duracin, and an Episcopal fund raiser, Terri

Mathes, told us about that nation's gradual recovery from the 2010 earthquake. Ms. Mathes reported that a campaign to fund reconstruction of the devastated cathedral in Port-au-Prince has already raised \$2,000,000.

The Presiding Bishop's address on Friday morning showed Bp. Katharine at the top of her game. (You can read the address on the Episcopal Church website. It's worth a visit!) She covered much ground, but stressed the need for the Church to be flexible, inclusive, and open to change. At one point, she startled many of us by saying that at age 34, even the Book of Common Prayer might be due for revision. Some highlights of her address: 1) Most measures of church health – attendance, membership, pledges – look inward. She urges us to look outward and “find life by giving it away.” 2) To illustrate decentralized authority, she observed that a jellyfish has no central nervous system but gets by nicely with separate but coordinated neural nodes. 3) She described Episcopalians as spinning in a “Trinitarian dance,” spiraling outward to embrace others.



In an invitation to innovate boldly when the Church is challenged, ++Katharine said, “Forgiveness is much easier to get than permission.” Our Presiding Bishop leads a church steeped in tradition, but she leans forward. She will not sit on the courthouse steps with a shotgun, defending “as is” against “what might be.” Nor, she argues, should we.

Friday morning's three hour chalk talk about General Convention, led by Bonnie Anderson and other Church leaders, told us more about that institution and Indianapolis than we needed to know. A high spot was Bonnie's brief history of General Convention, which has met every three years since 1789 with only rare exceptions. (It even met during the Civil War.)

Diane Pollard, who chairs the Church's Program, Budget and Finance Committee, drew the short straw for the morning session, for she had to describe a very tight, controversial budget. She did so with grace, noting that anyone who wants to add something in Indianapolis will need to tell her committee what to cut to keep the budget balanced. It is no wonder there is serious discussion of selling the Church Center in New York and moving its operations to cheaper digs.

Like almost all denominations, our Church is under threat as membership and resources wither and costs rise. The Friday afternoon session compared proposals to restructure the Episcopal Church to make it more efficient and more mission-oriented.. Panelists were +Stacy Sauls, Chief Operating Officer of the Church; Tom Little, head of General Convention's Standing Committee on Structure; and Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing, a lay preacher and human rights leader who sits on Bonnie Anderson's Council of Advice.

Bishop Sauls's resolution calls for a special commission to undertake top to bottom reconstruction of the Church. Members of the commission, appointed by the Presiding Bishop and Bonnie Anderson, would gather information from all parts of the Church and make their recommendations to the 2015 General Convention. +Sauls does not now envision calling a special convention, but others have suggested that costly option might be necessary.

Little admitted that change is needed, but insisted that his present committee is the right vehicle for it. He pointed to several issues that must be addressed by any plan: How to accommodate the emergent church. How to honor local initiatives. How to determine what tasks are appropriate for each level in the church. Whether to

lengthen or shorten General Convention, which now fills – overfills – a week every third year.

+Sauls and Little argue for a top-down approach to reformation and differ chiefly on who should lead it. Byron Rushing acknowledges the urge to change (“It has legs”) but urges us to move slowly, considering things that we *like* about the existing Episcopal Church and how they came about. Big changes (sanctions against slavery, permission to divorce, female deputies and clergy) and small changes (the use of ashes and palms in Lent and “funny hats” – mitres -- on bishops) came up from the grass roots, not down from above. Rushing sees the Church as “a great structure that needs to do better.” He urges our leaders to “listen to everyone” and asks, “Can we come up with reform that energizes all?”

Marya and I sense that +Sauls and Little skip an essential first step in reformation: describing the desired end state. Rosalie Ballentine+ (Virgin Islands), who co-chairs the committee charged with choosing among several resolutions on structure, put this very well: “Who are we, and what do we want to be?”

Just before the Synod adjourned, its outgoing President, Michael Rehill, said that however the Church proceeds, it cannot accomplish much before the 2015 General Convention. You’ll still recognize our Episcopal Church three years hence. Marya and I are grateful for that insight: We rather like it as it is.

Robert T. Dodd

Bell Tower update

Restoration of our historic bell tower is about to begin! Bids have been received and reviewed. The Vestry has authorized the Building Committee to proceed with the work. Final contract terms are being written. This summer the work will be completed, repairing our bell tower so that once again St. John's bell can be heard in the hamlet of Copake Falls.

Thanks are due to all who have contributed to the success of the Bell Tower campaign:

- the Building Committee, which identified the need for repairs and is overseeing the work,
- the Stewardship Committee, which raised the money needed for this essential work, and
- most importantly, all the individuals, foundations and members of the community who have generously supported the work. A full listing of all donors will be published later this year.

Thanks to God and to all who have supported the campaign!

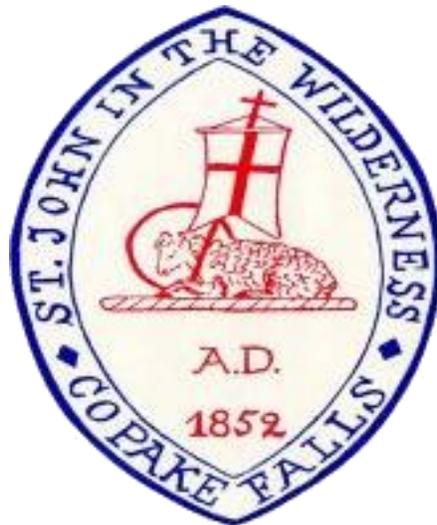
ECW

The May 1st ECW meeting was not an official meeting since we did not have a quorum. There were 5 of us and we enjoyed our time together. We discussed tentative plans. We hope to help at the KOA Bake Sales, May 26, July 7, Sept. 1 and Oct. 6th. We are planning a Bakeless Sale for June 17th, the proceeds of which are to help ECW with their projects including Samaritans Purse, Christmas Friends, shut in gifts at Christmas and

others that come up during the year. We also want to be sure to Pledge to the Church each year.

The next meeting of ECW will be June 5th at 1:00 pm in Burke Hall. All women are invited to attend.

Babs Croteau, President
babsc@fairpoint.net



Events in the Wilderness

Saturday, May 26. Memorial Day bake sale at West Copake KOA.

Sunday, June 24. 160th Anniversary of the Church of St John in the Wilderness and St John the Baptist Day. A celebration of the early history of this parish with a parade for all from the Iron Works to the Church at 9:00 am. The founders of the Iron Works, Lemuel Pomeroy and Isaac Chesbrough,

were among the founders of our church. Watch for further details for this day of celebration.

Saturday, July 7. Bake sale at West Copake KOA.

Saturday, July 14. Our annual Country Fair and Auction.

Sunday, July 15, 1:00 pm. Pork Barbecue.

Weekly events

Tuesday, 7:00 pm. Lectionary Bible Study.

Wednesday, 3:00 pm. Contemplative Prayer Group.

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Newsletter of the
Church of St. John in the Wilderness
(Episcopal)
Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Elen Freeston, Sr. Warden
Karen Flynn, Jr. Warden

Vestry

Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry
Jane Peck, Treasurer

Robert Callahan	Dale Peterson
Rebecca Garrard	Jeanne Van Hoesen
Steve Savarese	Milbrey Zelle

Eucharists

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)
Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

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