

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls

Fall, 2010

Thoughts from the Wilderness

Greetings to members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness,

I won't be endorsing (in my official role as Rector) any political candidates in this rancorous election cycle. That would be a violation of the establishment and free-exercise clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof")—as presently understood. Or at least I'd be threatening our tax exempt status. But we're all called to be aware of important issues when we assess government and when we vote. Christians are called to assess government and vote from a Christian perspective. Easier said than done considering that Christians can't seem to agree among themselves on a lot of internal issues must much less unite in their assessments of government and its roles.

One thing we can try to do is be more civil-- within and outside the church, within and outside our families, within and outside our political parties, in our discussions and in our attitudes. "Across the country, character assassinations and fear-mongering have replaced discussion and debate on important issues of our day, like the war in Afghanistan, the growing number of households under the poverty line, and climate change" (*Sojourners Campaign for Truth & Civility*). There no longer seems any attempt in political battles to avoid negative campaigning – indeed, more than ever it appears to be the norm. Candidates and everyone else need to make more of an effort to discern and discuss important issues rather than simply attacking one's opponents. Discernment involves becoming aware of authentic values through prayer and through study of both Scripture and history, among other things. We then need to



apply this wisdom in our discussions with others, in our voting and campaigning, and in our work--if we ourselves are government or elected officials.

Examples of important issues (issues of national and international significance) are correctly discerned above by *Sojourners*: war, poverty, and climate change/the environment. There is room for debate on these issues, but from a Christian perspective or a simply human perspective, war, poverty and the environment are unequivocally important issues calling for ethical decisions that promote justice.

We need to find a balance. Our discourse should be civil; yet at the same time we must not shy away from advocating justice, even when it's unpopular. It's a tricky balance indeed. Most of us may not be called to speak publicly on these and other important issues, and even fewer of us are called to run for office. But we can all pray about these things and act within our spheres. For example, we can ameliorate poverty by giving to the poor locally and supporting relief organizations like Episcopal Relief and Development abroad. We can also promote justice in this area by advocating for a living wage for all. We can help the environment (God's creation) by recycling and living simply. And we can promote justice in this area by regulating and penalizing those who would pollute. We can counter the root causes of war by being peaceful and nonviolent in our own personal relationships. These are just examples.

To change the subject, we have a bell tower to fix. I want to thank our Vestry (with Senior Warden Lucy Eldridge and Junior Warden Wendy Langlois) and our Buildings and Grounds Committee (led by Hank Croteau with significant help from Bob Callahan, Harry Garrett and the rest of the committee) for their hard work. We are in the process of applying for grants and finding other financial support, and we are discerning the right contractor to do the repairs that are needed. Thank you to everyone, members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness, for your prayers and your support in maintaining our beautiful and historic place of worship.

In peace,
John+

Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Committee, in the past couple of months, has been focusing primarily on our number one priority, the Belfry Tower. The supporting members of the tower are severely decaying (dry rot) to a point where it has to be removed from the church in the interest of safety as soon as funding can be made available. The most obvious question now "If it is a safety issue, why not remove it right away?" The answer to that is that we found out it must remain in place as is, if an inspection is required for a grant to be approved.

Our plans are to carefully remove it without causing any damage to the church and replicate it dimensionally exactly as it was built in 1852. We are also examining different species of wood that would better withstand the test of time and not create the same problem we are faced with. However the stumbling block for this whole



scenario is funding. The committee has solicited bids from 5 different contractors to in an attempt to facilitate this project. The bids ranged from \$35,000.00 to almost \$60,000.00. Unfortunately the scope of the individual proposals varied quite a bit and were not all in line with how we would prefer to have it done. In view of this, we will be preparing a set of specifications that would outline the scope of the job, including how it should be removed, the materials that are to be used (species of wood, etc), type of roof, time frame to complete the job and the final re-installation of the completed project.



Several avenues of possible funding (Grants, etc.) are being prepared with photos depicting the decaying tower to see if this type funding is available. Based upon the support that we can muster from these outside sources, we will proceed with re-submitting requests for bids that would include our specifications and scope of the job. In this manner, all contractors would be bidding on the same proposal as we have outlined as to how we want it removed and replicated.

We have received several monetary donations and we thank you. Whenever a project of this magnitude is attempted, there are always little hidden extras that were not foreseen that seem to pop up with additional costs. This is a very common item in Historic Restoration work and we are sure there will be these little extras. So these donations that have been so kindly donated and added to our purse for this project are gratefully accepted and appreciated. As we proceed along the project as outlined, we will try to keep everyone informed.

Respectfully,

The B&G Committee¹

¹ Robert Callahan, Henry Croteau (Chair), Robert Flynn, Charles Fox, Harry Garrett, and Jane Peck

From the Senior Warden

It has been a busy Summer and Fall season with our church participating in several activities as we reach out to the community. *The Winds in the Wilderness* summer concert was held August 15th and drew a nice crowd of enthusiastic fans of chamber music. The concert presentations are always quite lively and diverse, followed by an equally lively reception with the musicians joining in on the fun. The August concert followed in this mode, with several concert goers saying that they had enjoyed a very nice afternoon of excellent music, followed by an enjoyable reception held on the rectory porch. St. John's was quite involved in the events of the 3rd annual Copake Falls Day; we hosted the art exhibition in Burke Hall as well as a free



concert and play in the church, with many members helping out with the Saturday evening barbecue. Several church members also baked and sold lots of goodies for runners, their fans, and visitors who attended this popular community-wide event, chaired by our own Mibs Zelley.



The church grounds continue to be beautified with the establishment of a new corner garden surrounding the Iseli Memorial Stone and a new coach lamp. The exterior of the church has been cleaned and painted where needed this summer. Plans are afoot to deal with the Bell Tower which is in need of a total renovation. The building committee has met with six contractors to get estimates. Once a decision has been made as to the methods to be employed, and subsequent costs, a project plan will be announced to all church members.

The last of four bake sales as part of the Bridge the Gap Campaign 2010 took place at the Reinards' KOA camping resort in West Copake on October 9; hats off and many thanks to our wonderful bakers and sellers, and of course, to Gary and Kathy Reinard for hosting the events. They have asked us if we want to hold the bake sales again at the campground next year and we have given the thumbs up. The Community Family Bike and Hike Day on October 3 was also a fun event with a complimentary Brunch, a Blessing of the Bikes (12 bikes were blessed by Fr. John assisted by Pauline Royal), followed by biking and hiking along the Harlem Valley Rail Trail; also, a tag sale and bake sale were held on the church grounds. We were blessed with

beautiful Fall weather for the event. Fr. John continues to hold Contemplative Prayer Group meetings on Wednesday afternoons and this Fall has added a weekly Lectionary Bible Study on Tuesday evenings to the church schedule of activities.

A recent article in *Trinity News* by Canon Anne Mallonee, Vicar of Trinity Church, Wall Street, described a new program at Trinity to distribute food during the week to those in need. She commented on the reaction of parish participants in their new program: “Our expectation for such endeavors is, as Christians who acknowledge the role of grace in our lives, typically optimistic. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard people around the church of late saying about a new program, “Well, we don’t know what to expect, but we are going to try.” Well, we here at St. John’s are also taking steps to add new programs to our already existing programs. As we attempt various kinds of projects, both old and new, we are grateful for the fun and the helpful rewards which we have received in return.



Lucy Eldridge,

Senior Warden

St. John Launches Its Pledge Campaign

St. John’s recently launched its annual pledge campaign. Please consider seriously your pledge and we ask you all to be as generous as possible. We have a tradition here at St. John’s to be very generous. So, lets all pull together and make this year’s pledge drive a great success! We ask that you return your pledges by November 13th. Many thanks to all.

The Vestry

From Episcopal Church Women

St. John’s ECW met on October 5th with 8 members present. United Thank Offering (UTO) chairman, Dorothy Baker will be collecting your Blue Boxes/envelopes from October 10th to no later than November 2nd. Please bring final collection of the Fall In Gathering to our November 2nd meeting. The November 2nd meeting will be Operation Christmas Child (Shoe Boxes). Susan Mollo will chair this project. Bring your shoe boxes and gifts to this meeting to be packed and sent off. Each box needs shipping fees of at least \$7.00 enclosed.

We will do Christmas Friends again this year with one small difference. We will collect prior to our Christmas Luncheon. Please help us to do all these projects.

Our Christmas Luncheon will be combined with 7 other Churches and the Copake Grange. Invitations with menu choices are on the ushers' pew in Church. If you need one, please let Babs Croteau know. Return your menu choices and money to our Treasurer, Bea Baxter, 2889 County Route 7, Copake, NY 12516.

Election of officers was held on October 5, 2010. Newly elected officers assume office on January 1, 2011. Officers are: President Beatrice Croteau - Vice President, Jean Peck - Secretary, Susan Mollo - Treasurer, Beatrice Baxter. Edie Froggatt has been appointed Corresponding Secretary.

Thank you for all your help and support this past year. I appreciate your confidence in electing me your president. St Johns' has had a busy year and we stand ready to help in the future. Please remember our Servicemen and our local Food Pantry.

Beatrice A Croteau, President
babsc@fairpoint.net
518-851-9040

"Follow the Money!"

Part of the money that you donate to St. John's goes to the national Church, and part of that goes to Episcopal Relief and Development. If you've ever wondered how ER-D uses your money, here's a chance to find out.

On Saturday afternoon, November 13, Dr. Robert Radtke, ER-D's president, will speak at St. Andrew's Church, Albany, on the subject:

"Working to Heal a Hurting World: An Update on Episcopal Relief and Development."

Dr. Radtke's talk, sponsored by Albany Via Media as part of its Annual Meeting, will take place at 2 PM in St. Andrew's Carmichael Hall. It will be followed by a reception for our speaker and a short but important AVM business meeting. Like all of AVM's gatherings, this meeting is open to the public.

We met Rob Radtke two years ago at a meeting of Episcopal Province II in Albany. We found his description of ER-D's compassionate work in places as far flung as Indonesia and Haiti both entertaining and inspiring. We're sure that you will too.

Come and see how ER-D is using your gifts to serve our less fortunate brothers and sisters throughout the world!

St. Andrew's Church stands at the corner of North Main and Madison Avenues in Albany. For more information, talk to one of us at coffee hour or call us at 325-1492.

Marya and Bob Dodd

Beyond Copake Falls

St. John in the Wilderness has the good fortune to stand in a quiet corner of the Episcopal and Anglican world, where our major concerns are money and maintenance of a deteriorating physical plant. Even diocesan affairs seldom disturb us, for the see city – Albany – is an hour away, and it takes two hours to drive to the Christ the King Spiritual Life Center in Greenwich. It's easy to ignore the wider Church, to write off struggles within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion as “church politics” and “pass by on the other side.”

My purpose in this brief report is to bring you up to date on issues and events that now seem remote but have important moral implications now and may have very practical implications for us in the future.

The Anglican Communion Covenant. Touted by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the best way to hold the Communion together, the Covenant seems to be having the opposite effect. Only one province (Mexico) has endorsed it outright. Another (New Zealand) has endorsed three parts that define our beliefs but deferred action on a fourth section that deals with enforcement. That section is the sticking point. As written, Section 4 is too strong for progressive provinces like ours, Canada, and Scotland, which fear a loss of autonomy. On the other hand, it is too weak for conservative provinces (e.g. most of those in Africa) which want progressives to be restrained, if not punished, for such innovations as female and/or gay clergy and bishops. Some provinces, ours included, must move slowly for constitutional reasons, but many are simply perplexed over the implications of replacing a voluntary, diverse Communion with one bound to uniformity of belief by a contract.

Albany is one of a handful of Episcopal dioceses that have approved the Covenant, though the national Church cannot do so until the next General Convention. Although our

Convention's decision this June may seem to take this question off the table for us at St. John's, it really doesn't. The leaders of our Episcopal Church have written a letter to all bishops, part of which says:

We strongly urge every congregation in this Church to engage in discussion of the proposed Covenant at some time in the coming two years. A discussion group could be organized during Advent (2010 or 2011) or Lent (2011 or 2012), or at another time before General Convention. In order for General Convention to reflect the mind of the whole Church, the bishops and deputies who participate in General Convention need to know the thoughtful and faithful reactions of the many and varied faith communities represented in this Church.

One Episcopal leader (Name escapes me!) has pointed out that all else aside, discussing the Covenant is a great way to learn about our Anglican heritage. To that end, Albany Via Media hopes to sponsor "Conversations about Covenants and Communion" during this winter, one of them in our Deanery. We'll keep you posted about the time and place!

Aftershocks from Los Angeles. No one doubted that the consecration of Bishop Mary Glasspool in May would infuriate Anglican primates in the Global South, many of whom cannot accept a female priest, much less one who is openly lesbian. It also angered the Archbishop of Canterbury, who moved promptly to ask Episcopal representatives to ecumenical councils to step down. This prompted a response from our Presiding Bishop. In a June 2 pastoral letter to the Church, she observed that Abp. Williams had singled out the Episcopal Church but ignored provinces (e.g. Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) that are now involved in cross-border interventions in the United States. She continued:

We are distressed at the apparent imposition of sanctions on some parts of the communion. We note that these seem to be limited to those which "have formally, through their Synod or House of Bishops, adopted policies that breach any of the moratoria requested by the instruments of communion." We are further distressed that such sanctions do not, apparently, apply to those parts of the communion that continue to hold one view in public and exhibit other behaviors in private. Why is there no sanction on those who continue with a double standard?

The Presiding Bishop's veiled reference to the Church of England, which has many unacknowledged gay priests, shows how bitter the controversy over homosexuality has become. Further evidence of this is the threat by some Global South primates to boycott the next Primates Meeting (February, 2011) if Abp. Jefferts Schori attends.

Is there no good news? Yes! At a time when the Episcopal Church seems to have opponents all over the world, it is a pleasure to announce that on September 10, the two Moravian provinces in the United States voted to enter full communion with the Episcopal

Church. With the Lutherans and Moravians beside us (not to mention the Scots, who ordained our first bishop!), who can stand against us?

Bob Dodd