

August 2009

RECTOR'S NEWS AND NOTES

DISCERNING GOD'S SPECIAL MISSION FOR ST. JOHN'S

Churches and Gardens

Churches are like gardens. For instance, the old English garden is a carefully planned plot. Its purpose is to provide a beautiful landscape to awe and inspire visitors. It is most impressive when seen from afar. It is highly ordered and organized, so one must be careful not to handle anything too much.

Traditional, cathedral-inspired churches are somewhat like these gardens. They are beautiful, magnificent, well-organized places. They have awe-inspiring stained-glass windows and expensive pipe organs. Their purpose is to provide a space where people are inspired to worship the transcendent God in holy space. Among members there isn't much sense of a relationship. People of these churches come to worship to be awed, inspired, and transported into a mystical, sacred world.

The cottage garden is built around a home or cottage using a variety of plants. It provides beauty, shade, screening from nosy neighbors, and comfort. It takes only a few people to maintain it. This is a garden to be enjoyed at close proximity.

Some churches are like cottage gardens. Their purpose is to provide shade for those scorched by life's heat, small-scale beauty for those needing respite from life's ugliness. In these churches much more interaction connects the members. These are churches that cause people to feel at home, comfortable, and part of a beautiful nook in an otherwise busy world.

Then there is the vegetable garden. Its purpose is to feed others. Many churches are like vegetable gardens. They are mission-focused, often in the inner city, whose purpose is to feed others

physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The herb garden's purpose is to provide spice and healing. Many herbs are medicinal, while others add flavor to foods. Some churches are places of healing for those who are broken and hurting, salving their wounds and helping them discover God's love.

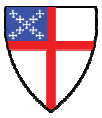
Finally, there is the conservatory. A conservatory is a large structure containing many kinds of gardens. Each room of the conservatory offers a contrast. Visitors are invited to spend as much time as they want in each garden.

Some churches are like conservatories, especially large nondenominational churches that present a range of experiences – a wide variety of Bible studies and small groups, as well as all sorts of worship, mission, ministry, Christian education, and spiritual experiences. They try to offer a bit of everything.

Just as there are many kinds of gardens in the world, there are many kinds of churches. But like gardens, churches are meant to be unique. The point is that when planting a garden, gardeners have to be true to their purpose. To plant and cultivate a healthy garden, we have to be as clear as possible that we are being true to the garden's purpose. Otherwise the garden becomes chaotic.

Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and the Father is vinegrower. The Vinegrower, God the Father – the Creator, plants the vineyard for a purpose: to bear fruit that feeds and nourishes others. When we fail to live according to God's purpose, our fruit withers on the vine and eventually is pruned.

If St. John's is to become truly blessed with God's grace and bear fruit, we must live and grow according to the purpose we were created for. We need to be clear about God's purpose for us. Nothing is more frustrating for churches than wandering aimlessly with no guiding purpose, or worse, aggressively following a purpose for which the church is unsuited.



What is our Purpose?

All churches are started for a purpose. All churches are started in response to God's call. Whatever the purpose, these churches were once clear about their calling. But over time churches forget. Many churches are adrift because they have no real sense of what God is calling them to do or to be.

In Revelation, God's angel delivers messages to seven churches. Five are sharply criticized because they abandoned their purpose. Two are praised because they remained faithful to their calling, even though they suffered all sorts of afflictions.

To begin the process of becoming a blessed church, we must, as a community, ask a basic question that lies at the heart of the life, ministry, and mission of a church:

"God, what is your call for us?"

Every church has a DNA, a kind of genetic code, created by God at its core. Every church is a living, breathing organism that lives according to its DNA. When churches know their DNA, growth just happens. A church's DNA defines who we are without making us all exactly the same. It allows each part of the Body of Christ to be different while focusing on the same God-given mission.

To come alive, we must live according to our DNA, our purpose, our call. It is in actively seeking God's call for us that we form a deep and guiding relationship with the God who created our universe, world, nation, community, and church with a specific purpose in mind – a purpose in harmony with God's eternal plan for everything.

The more we ask, "God, what is your plan for us?" and patiently listen for the answer, the more we become a blessed church. Prayerfully seeking God's will is like divining and drilling for living water. We have to make sure that we are drilling where the water is – not where we want it to be.

What can we do to discern God's purpose for St. John's?

There are two things we can do to open ourselves to discerning God's special mission, God's purpose, for St. John's.

1. As a congregation each of us can pray that God will enlighten us – prayerfully seeking what Christ, the Head of the Church, wants us to be and do. This is something we can do at any time of the day – we don't have to wait for Sunday to open our hearts and speak to Jesus. I am collecting any response that comes from this prayer.
2. I would like to call together anyone who is deeply interested in discerning God's will for St. John's, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon, over a meal, to discuss where we are at and the possibilities for St. John's. This group would brainstorm what God may be call us to do, and to prayerfully sift through the possibilities that come from this group and the parish at large. Please let me know if you would like to be included in this group.

Nothing that we do as a Christian community is more important than this. We will form a deep relationship with God when we seek and pursue his will.

As a church community, doing what we are called to do, how we are called to do it, and where we are called to do it we will experience God's blessing in our midst.

Your brother in Christ,

Jim +

DEACON'S DIALOGUE

Staples: A Better Place to Office! How many of us felt that "nail scratching on a blackboard" sensation when we heard that familiar slogan in the television advertisement that used a perfectly normal noun and turned it into a verb? It felt a bit



uncomfortable and a bit strange. We also may feel equally uneasy when we hear of someone trying to “impact” a situation, “parent” correctly, or “leverage” their assets. However, we feel perfectly at home with the all-time most frequently used noun-to-verb substitution, “Google it.”

In future editions of the St. John's Journal, I will be writing a column which I hope will facilitate dialogues, or conversations, between the deacon, you, the members of the parish and me. These exchanges will center on areas of our church life together that are thought to be particularly diaconal in nature such as the deacon's role in the liturgy and in service outreach. In the early church, the deacons took over the task of distributing food to the needy when the Christian congregations became too large for the apostles to handle it themselves.

Today, that servant ministry continues. Deacons are not only responsible for “hearing and seeing” the needs of the community inside, and outside the church, and for communicating those needs to the parish, but also for encouraging members of the parish to use their talents to help people who are physically and spiritually in need. Our ECW does a wonderful job with its outreach projects, but how would it work, do you think, if St. John's sponsored a specific ministry project itself? I have an idea about this. There are many children in the Winnsboro area who literally have never been out the county. Do you think it would it be feasible to set up some “mini-cultural exchanges” like a trip to the State Museum, an art gallery, or even just a trip to a farm to see that vegetables don't always come in a can or in shrink wrap. In this way, we not only serve others in the community, but we show them through our words and example, the love of Christ. Think about it, and then dialogue with me.

In Christ's service,

Margaret

THE SEARCH FOR THE EIGHTH BISHOP OF

THE DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

Pray for the success of our search

Almighty God, giver of every good gift; Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a bishop for the Diocese of Upper South Carolina that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Salkehatchie Summer Service



The Coleman Crew is having fun after delivering meals from St. John's to the Salkehatchie

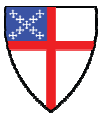
Summer Service housed in Fairfield Central High School during the third week of July. Salkehatchie Summer Service is a pioneering servant ministry founded by the United Methodist Church in South

Carolina. Salkehatchie Camps bring high school and college age youth and adult community leaders together for a week for the purpose of upgrading the homes and living conditions of those who don't have the ability or means to improve their homes.



DATES TO REMEMBER - "CELEBRATING CHANGED LIVES"—87th DIOCESAN CONVENTION COMING UP, OCTOBER 16-17

"Celebrating Changed Lives," the 87th Diocesan Convention hosted by St. Andrew's, St. James', and St. Peter's, Greenville, is coming up, October 16 and 17 at Greenville's Carolina First Center.



A FALL EXPLORATION OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Beginning August 30 and continuing on each Sunday Morning 9:45 to 10:45 through the remaining Sundays of Pentecost, St John's will offer a program inviting Bible study with the book of Mark. Deacon Margaret Jennings Todd will lead the class. The Bible Study will be structured around reading, discussing and learning about Jesus through Mark's version of the Gospel.

August 30 – Mark 1:1-20. The Beginnings of the Good News

September 6 – Mark 1:21-39. Jesus' Healing Ministry Begins

September 13 - Mark 1:40-3:12. Jesus' Ministry Provokes Controversy

September 20 – Mark 3:13-6:13. Jesus Prepares Twelve Apprentices for Mission

September 27 – Mark 6:14-8:26. Jesus' Immense Popularity prompts Antagonism

October 4 – Mark 8:27-10:52 The First Passion Announcement and the Transfiguration

October 11 – Mark 9:30-10:31. The Second Passion Announcement

October 18 – Mark 10:32-52. The Third Passion Announcement

October 25 – **Mark 11:1-25**. The Messiah's Royal Arrival in Jerusalem

November 1 – **Mark 11:1-25**. Jesus Refutes His Opponents

November 8 – Mark 13:1-37. Jesus Teaches About the Future

November 15 – Mark 14:1-15:47. Jesus' Last Days

November 22- Mark 16:1-8. The Empty Tomb

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR YOUTH WILL BEGIN AUGUST 30 AT 9:45

These classes will meet at the same time as Deacon Margaret's Fall Exploration Of The Gospel According To Mark to allow parents to attend Bible Study.

We plan to have a nursery for children younger than four.

Donna Davis will lead the class for Pre-School and Early Elementary children.

The curriculum - Rock Solid is based on Matthew 7:24–25 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."

Jesus frequently used common experiences to help people understand his message. Being a carpenter, a story using the construction of houses probably came naturally to him. Jesus was comparing this wise builder with a life where his message was put into action. Both resulted in a strong foundation.

What this parable is saying is exactly what we want to offer our children. We want to help them build a strong faith foundation so that when the rains and storms of life assail them (and they will at some time or another), their house of faith will not fall away. It will stand strong and give them strength and shelter.

Brenda Miller will lead the Middle School class. Living the Good News is a lectionary-based curriculum that supports and respects the journeys of denominations to teach, inspire and involve their members in prayer, worship and spiritual growth. Living the Good News bridges our everyday stories with the timeless stories of our



Christian faith—a celebration of God's unending love and grace!

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST- 8/9/09

All men and boys are welcome for good food and fellowship. Times: 8:00 a.m. Holy Communion in the Chapel; Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

COOKBOOKS

We have had a wonderful response to our cookbook sales. The books will continue to be on sale at the back of the church on Sundays and at the homes of Betty Ann and Nancy. If you purchased a book on the first Sunday they were on sale and have not received a correction label for Lucy's Corn Chowder recipe on page 21, we have labels available. All books sold after that day have been corrected.

Our thanks to each of you for your continued support of this project. Please help us publicize the cookbooks and be sure to get some for you.

Betty Ann and Nancy

GARDEN NEWS

Memorial: Dot Traylor by Mrs. C. O. Williams

OUTREACH CORNER

Help!! We need to make_a list of all the items donated for our adopted three girls to set up their apartment. This has come up after everything was taken to them. Please let me know what you gave as soon as you can.

Food Bank - St. John's has, in the past, been very generous. At this time, our local Food Bank needs our support more than ever. The economy is not good and the number of people they serve has more than tripled. Families who are eligible for the Food Bank must be screened by DSS and have been proven to be in need.

Haiti – While traveling this summer remember to

collect shampoo soap, and lotion. We still need blue ballpoint pens, ball caps, stainless teaspoons, scarves and sunglasses.

York Place - Time again for school supplies to send to York Place. They also need underwear and socks.

Greeting Card Sale – Thanks to Nannette Hawkins we have greeting cards to sell. The cards will be in the Parish Hall beginning August 2. Cost: \$1.00 each or 2 small cards for \$1.00. All the proceeds will go to charity.

Sincerely, Leann Smith

Staff

The Reverend Jim Neuberger – Rector
The Rev. Margaret Jennings Todd
Deacon
Ellen Nicholson - Minister of Music

Vestry

Walter Deierlein -Senior Warden
Harold Jones – Jr. Warden Emeritus
Ellen & John Nicholson – Treasurers

2009 - Walter Deirelein, Ernest
Ferguson, Harold Jones

2010 - William Hawkins, Nancy
Williams, Martha Wood

2011 – Logan Doty, Brenda
Miller, John Nicholson

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