

TRINITY NEWS

September, 2007

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

MT. POCONO PA

Mission Statement: Share God's unconditional love with everyone.

FROM THE RECTOR...

As I reflect on the respite of the summer and our Christian Formation program which resumes this month, I read Bill Lewellis' article for the Morning Call. With his usual wisdom and no nonsense approach to matters scriptural and theological, he has provide insight to guide us. Please read, mark, and take to heart his teaching, and then come for Registration Sunday - September 9th at 9 AM - and sign up to participate in the offerings for the coming months.

Ginny+

The bible's plain and not-so-plain teaching

By Bill Lewellis

The bible contains a lot of plain teaching. So little of it has to do with matters frequently debated and debased.

The bible's plain teaching comes with strong verbs and short sentences: gospel imperatives.

Repent, be, do, give, forgive, feed, clothe, go, sow, pray, judge not, fear not.

Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Heal the sick. Welcome the stranger. Visit the imprisoned. Proclaim good news. Sell what you have and give the money to the poor.

Love God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemies. Be reconciled. Take up your cross. Find your life by losing it. Love one another as I have loved you.

The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* pulls much of the bible's plain teaching into promises made during baptism: "Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers... Persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord... Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ... Seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as yourself... Strive for justice and peace among all people... Respect the dignity of every human being."

Not even the plain teaching, however, comes always with one-size-fits-all marching orders. And, then, there's the not-so-plain teaching: stories, images and themes that mess with our heads. The Good Samaritan, the Forgiving Father, Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, an innocent man on a cross, resurrection.

They invite us into the mystery of God's mercy and compassion, challenging us to imagine what is beyond ordinary imagination.

The most difficult aspect of God's relationship with us is not the strong verbs. It is that God loves us unconditionally. So hard to imagine. We hesitate to trust anyone, even God, in that regard.

There is nothing we can do to make God love us more ... and nothing we can do to make God love us less.

So many of us Christians, however, are really closeted heretics on this matter. We think there must be something.

The lingering grip of evil has not to do with doubts about doctrine nor with our refusal to make gospel imperatives part of our lives. Evil's last hope suggests we have done or can do something to earn (or lose) God's love – *and so should others.*

It may be that we'd rather that God not love us unconditionally. That's the greatest challenge to belief in God. For if God does love us unconditionally, that is what the command to love one another as God has loved us may mean.

Our lives are based on a true story that cannot be captured in orthodoxies, human certainties, laws, sermons or newspaper columns. When we discover the story of God who loves us beyond worth and measure, beyond whatever we can imagine, we will discover an ability to recreate our world beyond last Tuesday's conclusions.

A conclusion, Mark Twain is said to have said, *is the place where someone got tired of thinking.*

Keep thinking. It's so religious. That's why we have so many parables, images and themes in the bible. I think.

[Canon Bill Lewellis has been communication missionary for the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Episcopal Church in 14 counties of northeastern Pennsylvania, since 1986, and canon theologian to the bishop since 1998.]



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER, 2007

September 5 - 8:30am-12:30pm Trinity at Food Pantry
September 9 - 9am Breakfast/Registration Church School,
Adult Education & Confirmation Classes
September 11 - 7pm Vestry, Library
September 13 - 7pm Stewardship Leadership Team, Library
September 15 - 9-11am Pastoral Care Team, Library
September 16 - 9am Adult Education Resumes, Parish Hall
9am-9:45am Confirmation Classes Begin
9:45am Church School Resumes
11:30am Evangelism Leadership Team
Lunch, Parish Hall
September 21 - Newsletter Deadline
September 23 - New Hope Sunday
September 23 & 30 - 9-9:45am Confirmation Class
September 28 - Newsletter Mailing
September 30 - New Hope Sunday
October 3 - 8:30am - 12:30pm Trinity at Food Pantry
October 6 - National Acolyte Festival, Washington, D.C.
October 7, 14, 21, 28 - 9-9:45am Confirmation Class
October 7 - 10am Blessing of the Animals
October 9 - 7pm Vestry, Library
October 12 & 13 - Diocesan Convention, Cathedral Church
of the Nativity, Bethlehem
October 21 - 11:30am Annual Meeting, Parish Hall
October 27 - 9am - 3pm Vestry Retreat, Parry Residence

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

1 Tom Mettler
2 Kyle Smith
6 Peter Salmon
8 Carol Butiste
8 Kelly Johnson
10 Betty Speicher
10 Lillian Waters
15 Jeanie Weiss
19 Mary Banzhof
21 Grace Fierro
25 Lexie Vicich
27 Martin Baboolal
27 Lois Rothrock
28 Steve Clark

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

17 Bill & Barb Gessner
19 Ed & Caroline Passno

PASTORAL CARE NEWS

A meeting of the Pastoral Care Team is planned for Saturday, September 15 starting with Morning Prayer at 9 a.m. in the church. All those involved, please make an effort to attend so we can keep apprised of how folks are being looked after and who may need attention.

Everyone be sure to pick up a card in the Parish Hall showing that you are a member of Trinity Church. Keep it in your wallet with your insurance card so that you'll have it at hand should you need to be admitted to a hospital in the area.

CRAFTY LADIES NEWS

The Craft Creators have not been too successful in meeting during the summer months (no one showed up), so hopefully, we'll be able to get going with a little more enthusiasm in September. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. so **the next get-together would be on September 11 at 1pm**. Bring projects, ideas or thoughts of things that we can make for the Christmas Bazaar. All who are interested are welcome. Hope to see you then – Kathie Herling

Trinity Episcopal Church Mission Statement:

**Share Gods Unconditional Love
With Everyone.**

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Our Prayers have been requested for:

Ed Benintende
Steve Clark
Joyce DeGasperi
Bob Dexter
Al Eisenecker
Bill Killpatrick
Flora Rinker
Jon Ross
Ester Stein
Rhonda Treible

Marion Braithwaite
Lauren Boyadis
Jacob Gower
Deborah Gower
Mary Baker
Jeff Landi
Stacey
Anita Rivera
Alex Boehm
Violet McMahon
Mary Flaherty
Victoria Forstein

Rose Smith
Karen Kern
Lynn Tinsley
Rob McMahan
Betsey Hassrick
George Emery
Lois Rothrock

We give thanks for the well being of Charley Day

THE POWER OF PRAYER...

Dear Canon Day,

I would like to thank you for all of your miraculous prayers which helped me get through this difficult time in my life. I continue to recover and remain faithful in the light of GOD. I know he is with me helping me along. Again, thank you very much and I greatly appreciate the prayers of all the parishioners as well I know that all the prayers helped so much.

Sincerely,
Larry Atherton

BOOK OF THE MONTH

I am resisting the temptation to write about *Harry Potter* for this month! But I do want to comment on a novel I have read this summer. Lisa See wrote *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* after doing significant on-site research in the remote Hunan area of China. It takes place in the 19th century and gives us a poignant look at the life of the women of the era of foot binding. It is a powerful story of love, intimacy, sorrow, and forgiveness. Even though so much of the culture verges on shocking to our 21st century sensibilities, woven into it are timeless realities about the human heart and the human journey. I commend it to you and would suggest that even though it is a woman's story, it is not a story for women only.

TREASURERS REPORT - JULY 2007

Pledged Offerings:	\$ 10,330.50
Total Contributions:	\$ 15,006.08
Total Expenditures:	\$ 16,572.70

Net Monthly Income: \$ -1,566.62

Year to date net Income \$ -4,720.21

UTO REPORT

"What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well."
And you all did so well! The spring ingathering amounted to a nice \$235.95. This was forwarded to UTO where it will be distributed to help many others.
The world thanks you for your prayers and participation. Trinity is truly a blessed parish!

Julie Beech

GETTING OLDER

I wrote this little essay about ten years ago for the newsletter at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Shelby, Ohio - a very small parish in a small town.

Recently I have had conversation with others about the process of "getting older" and decided perhaps I should share these thoughts once again.

Some things have changed—the dog has died without me, my lung power has increased - and my faith has grown stronger (and I of course, am older!)

On Getting Older

I phrase this as "getting older" rather than "getting old". While I am older than a year or a day ago, I am still younger than what I will be tomorrow. There are certain benefits to this process despite the accompanying aches, creaks and quirks. I can enumerate these...

1. Saying whatever I want! My sons have magnanimously granted me the right to express myself boldly. They tell me that with age I have earned the right to be opinionated. Of course, I always have done that with them they just don't realize it. What else do you do when raising children but issue definite epithets like, "Don't wear those ripped jeans!" "Stand Up Straight!" "Be home by 10:00 tonight," and so forth.
2. Allowed to forget things. Forgetting is easy but remembering is better because then you have something to forget.
3. You get closer to God! My granddaughter has already planned my "going away party." She likes pink lining for a casket - I really prefer blue. She also has planned to have the dog buried with me. That's fine - both the dog and I are Sagittarians and are kindred souls. I don't think God will mind if she comes along. She will have her license but no leash for Heaven.
4. You can have a second childhood. You can live this again through your grandchildren - you get to go to all kinds of sports activities. You can even yell at the umpires and "refs" and people think it's marvelous that you can be so enthusiastic at your age! You can read books with them and enjoy the magic of imagination more than the kids.
5. God is more meaningful! He always lets me speak freely. He always remembered me and He lets me put my hand in His. So I will always be His child no matter what my age.

Julie Beech

Trinity Summer Music Festival is here and gone. This year's new format seems to have been enjoyed by all! The net ticket sales were \$1756.00 with expenses of: Food - \$179.96, Raffle Tickets - \$400.00 and Music Sound System \$150.00. **Our net profit was \$1026.04.** Our raffle ticket winners were: Rob McMahon, Patricia Goodwin, Lynn Gilbride, Ellie Schenck, Jan & Dick Orner, Jeanie Weiss, Mary Alice Holmes, Al & June Eisenecker, Barbara Gessner and David Parry. Thank you to Tom Parry and all those who worked so very hard to make this a success!

The Bombs of August

Dorset, VT, August 2007

I don't remember Pearl Harbor. I do remember World War II. We kids fought it for four years in homemade trenches where we lined up our tin soldiers and shot bb's at them. Davey Parsons did indeed shoot his eye out, or had it shot out, making him kind of a war hero as we looked with mixed admiration and dread at his glass eye.

We fought, too, by planting Victory gardens and collecting scrap paper and metal, kindling an early belief in recycling (and gardening). In a war where the popular media depicted our enemies as vermin, we also fought by scraping Japanese beetles into half-filled jars of kerosene.

This last project may have prepared us to accept saturation bombing of our enemies, including civilian populations, in the latter days of the war. Here in my hometown in August '45 I remember the rooster crowing to introduce the newsreel showing pictures of the bombs destroying Hiroshima and then Nagasaki a few days later. We were elated to think that the war which had occupied our entire conscious life would at last be over. When surrender came soon after, my town held a celebration on the village green which culminated in hanging an effigy of the Japanese leader General Tojo from the flagpole.

I think it was this last act that first kindled a feeling in me that I have had ever since: as my bumper sticker proclaims, "war is not the answer". I began to wonder if we could have ended the war by simply demonstrating the atomic bomb or by letting the Japanese know we didn't insist on unconditional surrender - they could keep their emperor.

I am now sorry to report that it appears certain that these measures would not have been enough. Richard Frank's "Downfall" is a judicious treatment of "the end of the Japanese empire". It makes it clear that there was no peace party seeking conciliation in the Japanese leadership. They were prepared to fight on the home islands and the other islands they still controlled to the last man, woman and child. Both Allied and Japanese casualties would have been horrendous - we had already had a taste of that in island battles like Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

In this context, the Hiroshima bomb could be considered the lesser of two evils, though Nagasaki still seems gratuitous slaughter to me. Hiroshima ended "the last good war" (as some have called it). It was followed by wise American leadership that rebuilt our former enemies and brought them into the community of democratic nations.

What, then, can someone who believes that "war is not the answer" make of the bombs of August? I think there are several lessons, still relevant today.

Beware of war fever. So many wars begin with false assumptions about the ease of victory. The Japanese generals thought they had a perfect chance to destroy the American navy at Pearl Harbor, but by doing that they unleashed a chain of events that led to Hiroshima. Since then, we have seen President Kennedy in the Bay of Pigs fiasco and President Bush in the Iraq tragedy misled by faulty intelligence into believing that all it would take would be an American invasion for native people to rise up and welcome us with open arms, flowers and kisses. We should reform our intelligence agencies so they provide just that: intelligence about the actual realities we face in the world, not cherry-picked facts to fit a pre-conceived policy. When war fever runs high, we should remember that once you are in a war you lose your freedom of action. You find yourself forced to make those horrendous decisions between killing 100,000 people all at once or five or more times that many island by island.

In contrast to the failure of various attempts by world powers to enforce their will on smaller countries, the last 60 years have seen one victory after another for nonviolent resistance to unjust force. In our own South, India, South Africa, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, what Gandhi and King called "soul force" has been triumphant. It is always the best choice when possible. But in a heavily armed world it is not always possible. It therefore behooves those who care about values to devote some thought, prayer and energy into seeking the best way to use military force.

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This leads us to try to fully understand two ancient prescriptions. One is the Roman motto: "If you want peace, prepare for war". The idea is that others will not provoke you if they see they have no chance of beating you. When following this policy it is important to remember that it begins with the idea "If you want peace..." The purpose is not to go to war but to prevent it. This means recognizing when you have won, as President Reagan did when Soviet leader Gorbachev let him know that the USSR could not keep up the arms race and Reagan used this as an opportunity to start ending that dangerous competition. Unfortunately, the present administration does not seem to understand its predecessor's wisdom and seems intent on rekindling that competition with anti-missile defenses near the Russian border. Saddam Hussein probably got rid of weapons of mass destruction to avoid a UN or US invasion, but we failed to recognize that we had won and invaded anyway with results that are widely considered a disaster for everyone concerned.

The Iraq war was a response to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, though Iraq was not involved in that attack. We were looking for some way to hit back because September 11th was not deterred by all our military might, since terrorists can strike and then disappear without presenting a target. Their strength and their resources come from the general population in the Middle East. I believe that nonviolent action based on justice and a decent standard of living for people in that area would be far more effective in curbing terrorism than an invasion which seems to create new terrorists every day.

Another cautionary note about the limits of military preparedness was President Eisenhower's warning that we don't have to buy in to every scheme proposed by those whose business is to make and sell weapons. We need other standards to adopt rational and moral limits on our necessary use of force.

This brings us to the classic Christian response to these problems - the "just war" tradition. It recognizes that coercive force may be justified at times as a lesser evil. The purpose though is not to bless wars, but to put moral limits on them. It says force should only be used when it is declared by legitimate authority for a righteous cause. It must be a last resort, used only when all other efforts fail. There should be a reasonable hope of success and the value to be gained must be greater than the harm war will cause. Force should be restricted to military targets, not used wholesale on civilians. These rules apply whether or not our enemies follow them, because they are actually more practically and morally effective than other uses of force.

If we conscientiously followed these principles, basing decisions on good intelligence, trying nonviolent methods whenever possible, recognizing when we have achieved our major aims, not expecting everything, we would not avoid all wars but we would be far less likely to find ourselves making the agonizing decisions that set off the bombs of August.

Peter Salmon

Our Kajo Keji Veggie sale, thanks to Cindy & Ziggy, has been a successful gift for our school building fund and a fine example of evangelism. It also provided for a bit of evangelism at home. As quickly as I purchased the beautiful gifts of God's never-ending bounty, I proudly gave them away to family, friends, neighbors and coworkers; explaining to them why they were donated and sold. How beautiful each vegetable soon became.

I was reminded of the following story.

I decided to pick up some string beans. Of all the sections in the vegetable market, the string bean people move the slowest; one bean at a time. "Lord, give me patience." I said to myself.

An elderly man blocked the aisle with his cart. He moved slowly as he searched through the pile of beans. Without turning his head toward me, he said, "It takes time to find the right ones. There's an art to this, you know. I see them as people."

"The beans?" I asked. "Yes." he replied in a matter-of-fact tone.

"See this one? This short, stubby one would tend to get passed over. Its appearance doesn't fit the perfect image of a long, thin, crisp bean. Most likely, after too much handling, the clerk will toss it out thinking no one wants it. So I take it. People don't know what they are missing, passing up this one," he continued.

"Now I know this curved one won't be used either. Some people see food as more than nourishment. It's all in the presentation. The image of a few select beans, all of the same length, lying on a plate nestled perfectly next to the entrée, supposedly adds to the enjoyment of the meal. I for one see my food as representing life itself. The world is full of texture, odd shapes and sizes. My world is not perfect. Nor is my dinner plate," he said.

Suddenly I realized that we were the only ones in this aisle -- very unusual for this time of day. I was calm and very attentive to everything this man was saying.

"Yes, this pile of beans reminds me that people come into my life in all sizes. Some are broken like this one. Others are still attached to the vine where they were nourished and protected and oftentimes were ripped away from their roots, carrying with them resentment and fear. Like this bean, the vine needs to be removed so that it can be seen in its full beauty and not one clinging to things of the past," he said as he tossed them in his bag.

A few minutes had passed as I stood in silence just watching the old man as he dug deep into the pile, turning and tossing them from the bottom as one would stir a salad.

"Well, I must go now," the man said. "I'll leave you with these beans. Be kind to them. Don't judge them just by looks. Inside every one of them are the same life-giving elements. But like people, many will never be given the chance." he said.

"So they end up on the bottom, tossed aside?" I asked.

"The difference is," he replied, "as people, we have a choice not to settle for the garbage heap."

He tied the top of the plastic bag and turned away, missing the cart completely as he tried to place it inside.

"Sir, let me get that for you," I said.

"Every once in a while I misjudge the distance. I've been blind all of my life. You'd think I'd have this worked out by now."

Suddenly a young lady appeared from around the corner.

"Dad! I'm over here, straight ahead of you. Would you like me to pick out some nice tomatoes?"

"No, honey. I know just what I need," he said. Turning back toward where I was standing, he whispered, "She's always in such a hurry. She'll miss the best ones. Have a great day!"

What insight. What vision this old man had. A blind man helped me to see what joy I had been missing in the simple act of shopping for vegetables. I wonder what else I have been blind to in the hurry of my day. I wonder if I've passed anyone by.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob McMahon

Chair, Evangelism Leadership Team