



The Road to Damascus

November, 2013



New Website is Live!



Our completely new website is now live. Please visit often at: <http://www.stpaulsstockbridge.org/>

Thanks to John Davies, Jon Geldert, Carl Sprague and the others who worked tirelessly on this project.

Flourish in Faith

Dear Friends,

Wouldn't we all love to flourish in faith and be certain of God's presence at all times and in all circumstances? Over the past weeks we have reflected on God's vision for St. Paul's and invited members to prayerfully determine God's will for the gifts and resources with which they have been blessed.

Over the next several weeks we will reflect on God's vision for St. Paul's and invite members to prayerfully determine God's will for the gifts and resources with which they have been blessed. These are the seeds we will plant for our journey:

- Through November 11, bulletin inserts written by Episcopal stewardship leaders across the country are providing reflections on stewardship and faithful giving.
- Each Sunday through November 3rd we will hear personal thankfulness stories to learn first-hand how your fellow parishioners have flourished in their faith through intentional giving of their financial resources.
- On November 11th we will celebrate Commitment Sunday, the culmination of the journey, when pledges will be completed and offered as an act of worship

The richness of the journey is dependent upon each of us and our openness to God's leading. As we seek to lay a fertile foundation in which seeds may be planted to blossom in our community, let us join together to do God's work through St. Paul's.

Together in Christ,

The Stewardship Ministry Team

Fr. Tom's sermon begins on page 4.

Parish Profile: The One and Only Flo

By Vaunie Grauly

Ever wonder who's been in our congregation the longest? It's the same "unnamed person who radiates warmth and gratitude" referred to by Tom in a recent sermon as he stole a glance in Florence Andrews' direction.

Florence Elizabeth Andrews has attended St. Paul's Church since she was a little girl growing up on Church Street. Her mother and father, Juanita and Charlie, sent her to Sunday School along with her sister, Charlene. At age 90, Florence, or Flo as she is better known, has been a member for eighty years and has seen eight rectors serve the church!

Florence was married to her husband, Bruce, at St. Paul's in 1942 when Edmund Randolph Laine (1926-1949) was rector. They raised their daughter Kathy in the church. Kathy and Flo recall staying at the Rectory to take care of former Rector Jack Leather's (1952-1957) children.

On a recent Sunday after the 10 am service Florence recalled "many happy times here and many friends." Anna and Francis Pilling, longtime members of St. Paul's, were Godparents to Kathy. Flo also speaks fondly of Val and Tad Evans.



Vaunie Grauly with Kathy and Flo

Everyone who is familiar with Flo would agree she is always dressed impeccably. Ever stylish, Flo has a hat to match every outfit. She claims that she wears a hat to cover her head on "bad hair days," but by now it has become her signature feature. As a little girl, Flo lined up at a local store with her mother and other girls and women to buy their Easter hats and the hat habit took.

Many folks would add that Flo is famous for bike riding throughout the town of Stockbridge. Well into her late seventies, Flo could be seen pedaling along Church Street. Yes, always sporting a hat!

Flo is also famous for her quick laugh and the twinkle in her eye. In typically modest fashion, she is reluctant to speak about her many contributions to St. Paul's parish life. Urged on by her good friend, Bill Maynard, Flo acknowledged that she did "just about everything except preach."

Flo's favorite activity at the church has been her work on the Altar Guild, which she headed for many years. She enjoyed training people for Altar Guild and washing and pressing the purificators. She says it felt "personal" being able to participate in the service this way.

Flo has also served as a Eucharistic minister. Considering all the church social events Flo has helped with, she has undoubtedly baked many cookies, cooked many meals and washed many dishes in the Parish House kitchen.

Update from Mission and Outreach

The committee currently includes Vaunie Grauly, Kendra McLeod, Carla McCormick, Lynda and John Morse and Peter Putnam. Please speak to Tom if you have suggestions, are interested in joining or want to attend a meeting. We welcome your ideas!

St. Paul's continues to provide space for community meetings and do important outreach at the Food Pantry in Lee and our wonderful Children's Center. We are looking to clarify a vision for the church's mission and outreach. At the mid-October committee meeting, all agreed there are tremendous needs in the world- too vast for our size church to address. Additionally, committee members are hopeful that new folks will join the church and would like to try various ways to make this happen.



Bishop Fisher has urged us to think about how our church can "have an impact on the world around us." Results of the spring survey indicate that parishioners feel St. Paul's outreach efforts should remain small and deep- DO-ABLE!!!!- and focused on the local area, not the region or the world. It would be better for us to adopt a realistic perspective and not take on too much.

The vision for the committee is not all about money, fundraising, making monetary donations. It also includes providing needed goods, a service, a space and support to others.

The main question we addressed was: What do we see as the purpose of our Mission and Outreach committee? We identified the following 4 main points:

1. to expand awareness of St. Paul's church and attract new members
2. to determine and meet needs in local communities
3. to do "reach in" and take care of our own
4. to raise awareness of needs and ways to do God's work by supporting others

One specific project that was approved is collecting disposable diapers and pet supplies in addition to the non-perishable food for the Food Pantry. Donations may be left at the back of the church. Other proposals include a winter clothing exchange, collaborating with other churches to "adopt a family," and reviving the Christmas ball donation tree.

Fr. Tom's Stewardship Sermon on Oct. 13

“Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

This is what Jesus says to the one leper, the Samaritan foreigner, no less, who comes back to him to give thanks. But why does Jesus say this to *him* in particular. As Jesus himself says, weren't ten people healed? How has this Samaritan leper been made well in a different way from the other nine?

I was thinking about that this week as I realized how quickly I was healing from my recent minor surgery. I thought further back over the last year and the gifts I've received of healing, from the time of the diagnosis of prostate cancer through its successful complete removal in January. I realize how my heart overflows with gratitude to everybody in the parish who has supported me in this time, to my family – especially the presence last weekend for me and here at St. Paul's of daughter Elizabeth and grandson Charlie – and to the medical people, my colleagues and many others.

And I realize how natural it is becoming for me to be full of thankfulness for the many gifts which God has put into my life. I realize that too often I've been the 3rd or the 8th person out of ten, not the first, to turn back to God to give thanks.

There are many ways to show our gratitude. As St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying, “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.” We've all known people who radiate love, gentleness, compassion and gratitude. Gratitude suffuses their lives as a whole. They have been “*made well*” on many levels. And that makes a powerful difference to them in their own lives and to all of us whom their lives touch.

Luke's Gospel has led up to today's scene with a series of stories about how people set priorities in their lives. Over and over again, Jesus talks explicitly about how we handle our possessions and our money as the most significant single indicator of our spiritual health. Jesus is blunt on this issue. And I've promised Bill Vogt that at least this once, I will be, too.

To get into this, I'd like to use an image from one of my personal icons, Winnie-the-Pooh. Now, Pooh tends to be too cautious about what he is capable of. He tends to feel he'd better stoke up on a little more honey before he faces the world. And then he takes a deep gulp and sets forth.

The moment I'm thinking of is the time when the great flood has left Pooh sitting on a tree branch over his flooded home with a hoard of honey jars, all gradually becoming empty. When the last one is empty, Pooh finally takes his leap of faith and sets out in the chaos with only the last empty honey jar to hold on to.

Then there's that marvelous image where sometimes he's happily above the water, riding high on his buoyant empty honey jar. And sometimes the honey jar is floating high and he's hanging on to it down below it under water.

I think it's that way with our “stuff.” Do we hold lightly on to the money and the possessions we have been given by God, receiving them in gratitude in order to use them well and wisely and generously? Or do we cling to our money and our possessions in doubt and anxiety? When that's the case, our “stuff” possesses us, our “stuff” uses us. We're the ones who end up so much of the time “under water” (that's a technical banking term, of course). Instead of an attitude of gratitude, we slip into anxiety. Instead of believing we are surrounded by abundance, we see only scarcity.

The Christian way of life has a specific way of setting our priorities and our attitudes. We inherited it from Judaism and we both passed it on to Islam, by the way. It's a very simple proposition. Instead of looking at how limited our resources are, and wondering when they will run out, we can look at everything we have as a bounty which gives us rich opportunities. The spiritual discipline which helps us internalize this perspective is called “proportionate giving.” Like the ancient Israelite farmers, we can give back the “first fruits” of the harvest to

Sermon, continued...

God, next put some grain aside as seed for next year's planting, and then use the rest of the harvest for sustenance. Giving something back to God *first* from what we have received is a powerful way of resetting our perspective from the gloomy outlook of scarcity to that attitude of gratitude which is so much more effective as a response to God's generosity, a commitment to living that way ourselves.

Our grandsons Charlie and Tommy have been taught this approach as part of their very first education about money. Their weekly allowance began for each of them as a quarter for God, and quarter to be saved, and fifty cents to spend as they liked. As the amounts involved grow, they spend that last half of whatever they have with increasing confidence and joy.

As I've said in past years, a similar thing happened to Marthe and me early in our marriage. We'd heard that giving a proportion of what we had back to God up front, through our church, would be easier to do and more positive for our lives than giving what we could spare *after* everything "important" had been taken care of.

The idea was presented so forcefully that we decided to try it for one year, if only to prove how unrealistic it was. So instead of giving what we had been -- about 1 ½% of our income -- we wrote a check for 5% of our income every week. (And to speed up the process of letting ourselves off the hook by showing it wouldn't work, we made it 5% of gross pay, not net).

At the end of the year we were *shocked* to find that not only had we survived the experiment, but that we were better off than we have been the year before. Giving a proportion to God up front made us more aware and more confident in using the rest of what God had given us. Our lives were becoming more whole, more healthy through better priorities. And so we found ourselves giving another 1% up front each year until we were not only tithing to the church but doing more for other worthwhile causes well.

On November 10th, we'll all have the opportunity to look at what our proportionate giving to God through St. Paul's can be in 2014. As we reflect on how we can each "Flourish in Faith" during these weeks, I pray that God will kindle a true "attitude of gratitude" in each of our hearts, because I deeply believe that this way of living brings true richness into each of our lives.

Thanks be to God who blesses us so abundantly.
Amen.

Safe Church Policy

The Episcopal Church has a safe church policy. The policy has been implemented to "make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ." We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.

For us at St. Paul's Church, the Safe Church Policy is especially important to assure that our children are nurtured and learn of our Lord Christ in a safe environment. To that end, all people working with children in our church must go to Safe Church training.

If there are concerns please speak to Linda Day, the Safe Church officer or to our Rector.

Remembering Peter Berle



Carla McCormick designed and arranged Altar flowers in memory of longtime St. Paul's parishioner Peter Berle.

Report of the Western Massachusetts Diocesan Convention

By Diocesan Delegate Linda Day

On October 26th Rev. Tom Damrosch and I attended the 112th Convention of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. The two outstanding impressions left with me were first, the extensive and thoughtful missionary work being done in and by our Diocese, and second, the excellent address given by our new Bishop Douglas Fisher.

The Bishop Fisher gave his [address](#), which I will paraphrase here:

He began by reading the Gospel verses that describe the Word of God coming to John the Baptist in the wilderness. This contrasts the Samuel, Ch. 3, "The Word of God was rare in those days. Visions were not widespread." In reality, that was a time of wilderness...a place of chaos, confusion...a place of hunger.

It seems we are in a time of wilderness. It feels like a wilderness when we see a decrease in Sunday church attendance. It feels like it when we look at our church budget. It feels like it when we look at world affairs. We are ready for the Word of God!

Here in Western Massachusetts we have a grand vision. It is Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God – when Mercy, Compassion, and Hope will reign. This vision should change us personally and as a society. The Holy Spirit will be with us as the vision becomes reality.

What can we do in Western Massachusetts? Here are a few ideas:

1. Let's stop "solo" ministry meaning one priest, one church, one congregation. Let's have Christians work together, do mission together, collaborate not just with Episcopal churches but with Lutherans, Methodists and Catholics. And yes, work with Jews and Islamists too. This is far more effective.
2. Let's do neighborhood ministry.
3. Pass it on! Spread the Good news of Jesus Christ using whatever media is available to us.
4. Let's make room for one another in the liturgy. We should not be "literalists" when it comes to our Book of Common Prayer.
5. Personally reaffirm your faith as was done for you in the Baptismal Covenant.
6. Have an intentional development of lay preachers.
7. Make the church building serve you, the needs of the community, and God.
8. Embrace the issues of the times and work to express our Christian viewpoints:
 - *Tell the truth about casinos. Jesus came to bring Good News for the poor. Casinos are bad news for the poor.
 - *Turn the tide from what has become a run-away gun culture.
 - *Welcome the stranger – we are an immigrant nation.
 - *Learn about climate change and how our church can become involved.
 - *Feed the hungry.
 - *Welcome our Armed Forces veterans into our church community.

Stay centered on the big picture of Jesus – the Reign of Compassion, Mercy, and Hope. God will multiply the grace and we will move into God's future!

News from St. Paul's and Beyond

The Food Pantry Needs Our Help

On November 9th the Lee Kiwanis Club is again having a STUFF THE TRUCK event to benefit the local Food Pantry. We're looking for volunteers starting around 1:30 for help sorting after the truck is unloaded. This might be an event for our older youth or young families to get involved.

■ Torey Winn

A Big Day For Jane Tillman

On December 14, Jane (right, with Vicar Daina Salnitis of St. Helena's shown blessing chickens at the annual Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 6 at St. Helena's) will be ordained as a Transitional Deacon at 10:00 a.m. at Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield. Carpool opportunities are available through the church office.



Worth Reading...

Here are links to blogs from Bishop Doug Fisher

<http://blog.diocesewma.org/>

And from Rich Simpson, Canon to the Ordinary

<http://www.rmsimpson.blogspot.com/>

Worth Waiting For...

The Casey brothers, Gilbert and Carl, are becoming known for their refreshments. Below, they serve up mud pie with gummy worms.

