



St. John's Revelatory Letter

Volume 121, number 1 January 26, 2008

Come to the Greenhouse: Lent at St. John's

"Bless me, Jesus, for I have sinned!" How's that for a personal self-centered beginning of Lent! "Save me, Jesus, from myself?" Is that any better? Because sometimes we need to be saved from ourselves, from destructive and harmful, and - let's use a big word here— **pernicious** behaviors that hurt me and you and the green ash tree too, with all its denizens. As we age, we discover that there is no behavior or attitude of ours that is totally private. All of our actions affect at least one other person.

And so we seek God's help, especially in Lent, but all the time too, to grow more and more

aware of how interdependent we are with all humanity, all creation.

I, Bruce MacDuffie, invite you at this chilly time of year to the St. John's Greenhouse. Here we offer a welcome greenhouse effect! It is the effect of being warmed in the sunshine of God's love in our blessed Lord Jesus so much that we find it safe to look at ourselves and our own behaviors. With Paul telling us in Romans that **while we were yet sinners' Christ died for us, (not after we've repented and made ourselves presentable)** we find the confidence to let each other extend God's help to our growth. We reach out

hands in community and bring walk each other into this lovely late January greenhouse, redolent of growthfulness.

St. John's Church community is the greenhouse. Lent is a great opportunity for developing a growthful prayer, Bible reading, and meditation practice. We reach out to enjoy our Methodist and Congregational sisters and brothers at a mid-week soup and sandwich meal and a service. Pastor Chesnut assigned the theme "reconciliation." We study together on Monday nights. We celebrate the inclusive community we are growing into becoming. I pray a **GROWTHFUL LENT FOR US.**



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LENT PRINCIPAL SERVICE SCHEDULE

Feb. 6—Ash Wednesday

6:45 AM Service with ashes for those unable to attend evening

6:00 PM Soup and Sandwich

7:00 P.M. union Service at St. John's

Feb. 13—Wednesday at the Congregational Church

6:00 P.M. Soup/sandwich

7:00 P.M. Union service

Feb. 20—Wednesday at the United Methodist Church

6:00 P.M. Soup/sandwich

7:00 P.M. Union service

Feb. 27—Wednesday at St. John's Episcopal Church

6:00 P.M. Soup/sandwich

7:00 P.M. Union Service

March 5—Wednesday at the Congregational Church

6:00 P.M. Soup/sandwich

7:00 P.M. Union Service

March 12—Wednesday at the Methodist Church

6:00 P.M. Soup/sandwich

7:00 P.M. Union Service

March 16—Palm Sunday

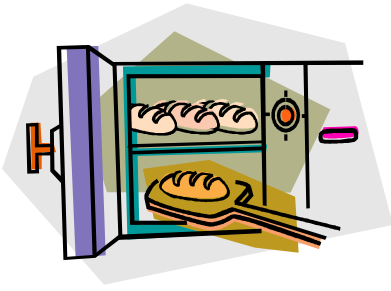
Holy Week Daily at 6:00 P.M. Stations of the Cross

Thursday Union service at Methodist Ch. At 7

Good Friday: 12:05 & 6PM

Special points of interest:

- We unite with Methodist and Congregationalists to celebrate Wednesdays in Lent.
- Lent as a good greenhouse effect?
- Baking bread as spiritual growth
- Offended that we include?
- Share stories of caring for the earth



Baking Communion Bread as a Spiritual Growth Activity: one small way of being a creating congregation, not simply passive consumers.

Imagine a person new to St. John's Worship discovering that some of our own members make and offer the communion bread. That can be a symptom of who we are and hope to become as a community....those who share the bread they make by their own labors with others. A "dipper-in" to our service might exclaim to others, "Do you know that those crazy St. John's folks make their own communion bread?" This is one more of those little things that make a difference in the perception of who we are

becoming, tapping into the long term commitment and still new creativity of our people.

So now we have **ST. JOHN'S BAKERS GUILD!** The baker of the week brings the bread to church as an offering...nothing better than fresh baked communion bread. We receive not only spiritual nourishment, but find it a flavorful nutritional communion as well.

It was almost a year ago that we began to organize this group, and now the group has decided to be-

gin. When we spoke of this idea, Jane Brandt and Paulette and Bob Allan said it was a great idea.

An important opportunity in this activity is saying some special prayers while baking and kneading, and then finishing by bringing the bread to the altar at the offertory. We're blessed that Jen Kuntz offered to help coordinate. Bakers volunteering so far: Bob and Paulette Allan; Jennifer Kuntz; Jane Brandt; Amy Oksa; Lee MacDuffie; Mike Kelley. We begin Feb. 3. Come and be fed!

Our inclusion is the way Christ reaches out in a wide embrace to hug all the creation and set it free from guilt and fear.

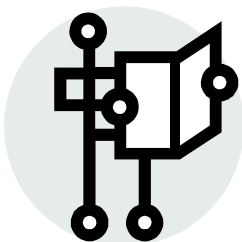
Offended that We Include?

Some parts of the Episcopal Church are mightily exercised that other parts of the Church include all kinds of persons: persons who happen to be Scottish-American and stumbling bumbling folks like me; those who pray to God in different language than I do; folks who happen to be gay or lesbian; all sorts and conditions, as the old prayer in the Book of Common Prayer says. Our in-

clusion is really the way Christ reaches out in a wide embrace to hug all the creation and set it free from guilt and fear.

Isn't it strange how sexuality seems to be the trigger for offense? And isn't it further strange that only gay and lesbian sexuality is the trigger for objection. We don't stand at the church door and say "Here comes one of those darned

heterosexuals now, do we?" I hope that is because we recognize each other as whole human beings, not simply sexuality wearing a human Halloween mask. The Diocese of North Carolina two weeks ago in Convention resolved to foster and continue the full inclusion of all the baptized in ministry, lay and ordained. Hoorah! Would that more dioceses had such courage



Maru Massad chaired the annual meeting

Annual Meeting and Statistics

St. John's Annual Congregational Meeting on January 13, the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, elected the following persons to the Vestry:

Fern Pokorny—Senior Warden.

David Solheim—Junior Warden.

Robert Allan as new Vestry

member.

Leslie Ross as new Vestry member.

We said thank you to those whose terms expired, i.e., Mary Massad after a two year stint as senior warden, and Del Kussy, after completing the term vacated by Jeffery Womack when he moved to Texas.

Mike Kelley and Richard Pokorny continue as Vestry members, with Richard Pokorny continuing to serve as treasurer.

Average Sunday attendance for 2007 increased from 16 to 20.

Active baptized membership increased from 24 in 2006 to 34 by Dec. 31, 2007.

St. John's sloooowly getting organized web site indicates that we do gather as small church community on Sunday morning. That is wonderful. Because we care about building St. John's into a still more nurturing community, perhaps you will allow me to point out some other ways for us to build a sense that we want to be a church community reaching beyond our familiar circles of knowing each other.

1. St. John's Church Community Directory lists

birthdays, baptismal anniversaries, and wedding or household anniversaries. Send a card, an email, or call on the phone when one of our number celebrates these events.

2. Announce that you are looking for a few other folks to gather with you to read and pray the Bible. Then gather. It doesn't require the priest for this to happen.

3. Take a few extra minutes when you pass Hebron, Halliday, or Lemmon to say "hello" to our outlying members...simply add 20 minutes to your schedule(Jane Brandt, Carissa Swenson, Becky Maier)
4. Explore with Bruce and Jen some nurturing activities to include 12 year old Alex and 4 year old Katie, and maybe others.
5. Ring the bell Sundays.



Any baptized person can organize a Bible study—growing in faith together

For the Beauty of the Earth

The Episcopal Public Policy Network is sponsoring a Lenten series for the entire Episcopal Church, called "For the Beauty of the Earth." While we praise God for the vast and amazing earth he provided, it is also important that we remember our responsibility to care for this creation. During the six weeks of Lent the Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN)

asks Episcopalians to join in a Lenten discipline of focus on care of creation. EPPN will provide six weeks of education, opportunities for advocacy, and ideas for simple steps you can take in your home and your church "for the beauty of the Earth." The series will start on Ash Wednesday with an introductory message and will continue throughout Lent, focusing on a different aspect of climate change each week: Climate Change Affecting

Our Surroundings

Hunger, Poverty and Climate Change

Water of Life

Everyday Emissions and Climate Change

The Climate is Affected by How We Do Business

The Interdependence of Our Health and the Environment

Each week EPPN will provide information on the issue, opportunities to share your stories of advocacy and conservation, tips for personal and community conservation, fun and interesting interactive quizzes, and much more.

"The Episcopal Public Policy Network is just that – a network," says Mary Getz, Grassroots Coordinator for EPPN. "We hope that during this series not only will we share information about these important issues and opportunities for

advocacy at the federal level, but we also hope

for lots of exciting feedback from Episcopalians around the country who are already taking steps or beginning a new commitment to care for creation." If you have a story to share or

pictures, or even a web-video about how you, your family, church, or community is involved in caring for creation, please email eppn@episcopalchurch.org

Join EPPN during Lent "For the Beauty of the Earth" at <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/climate>

Please, St. John's, share your personal reports of steps you have taken individually or in your household to increase your own stewardship of creation for the beauty of this whole earth, our island home. Email your stories to stjohns@ndsupernet.com.

Share your personal or household stories of your care for this earth



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Seeking to Build Inclusive and
Growthful Christian community
in the Heart River Valley and
Stark County

We're on the web:
www.cometostjohns.org



COMMUNAL PRAYER EVEN THOUGH APART

John's.

Within a week all of us will receive a booklet entitled *Daily Reflections for Lent: Not by Bread Alone*, by Katherine Howard, O.S.B. Each day's selection refers the reader to a couple of scripture passages, and provides a reflection, a suggestion for meditation, and a prayer. With all the members of St. John's sharing the same readings, meditation approach, and prayer every day an increase in spiritual power, in communication, can result among us.

The little booklet is small enough to fit a pocket. Take it along wherever you go and share with the rest of the community in this particular Lenten practice.

Bruce MacDuffie is going to augment the practice with a suggested Psalm or Psalms for each day. Try to read the Psalms aloud. Persuade others to read them with you if possible. Let the Psalter become part and parcel of our beings.

Each household will also receive the Lenten Journey Poster providing a

reminder of simple devotions and acts we can undertake as we progress toward Easter.

Some of us have agreed to undertake some additional kindness each day. It might be as simple as calling someone we do not see very often in church. It might be anonymously prepaying for a cup of coffee for someone who will be surprised pleasantly when they try to pay for their next cup. It might be giving a little more money to charity, or driving less for the