



# THE COURIER

The Newsletter of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, River Hills, WI

July 2010

## THE RECTOR'S WRITINGS

I woke up today to a cacophony of noise outside my window. It's been cool enough at night to have the windows open with the air conditioning off. And this morning, the birds were singing with the volume of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir! Come on, birds! (I thought), it's only 4AM, give it a rest, my feathery friends! But alas, on and on they sang until I finally got up thinking I'd pray my way into the day rather than staying in bed and cursing at the noisy birds.

As I stumbled my way through a cup of coffee and into some prayer time, I remembered Tagore's famous quote in which he defined faith. He wrote, "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark."

Faith is part of the essence of our lives as Christians. Faith in ourselves, faith in one another, faith in God, who is all love.

And so God, using the vehicle of very noisy birds, got me thinking about love as I sipped my precious first cup of coffee and held my Prayer Book in my lap. To think about love is to pray. Because God is love.

In my office among all the various items that I have on the walls is a framed quote that says, "Go Beyond Reason to Love. It is Safe. It is the Only Safety." (As an aside, I encourage any of you who wish, to take a walk around my office some day. You'll learn at least a few things about your new Rector.)

A priest friend of mine gave me the above quote when I was ordained to remind me of the centrality of love to my life as a priest. Love. It is the only safety.

You know, I'm going to make mistakes. And when I do, I'll apologize. Some of you had that experience recently at the 10AM service. It's what love looks like.

I may hurt you from time to time. It will always be inadvertent. And, if I do, and I know that I have hurt you, then I'll apologize. It's what love looks like.

If you hurt me, I'll tell you directly. It's what love looks like.

(continued on page 2)

Love, as the author of the first letter to the Corinthians writes, “is patient and kind; does not rejoice in wrongdoing.” And then the kicker, “It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Endures all things? Ouch. As it turns out, it’s hard to love well.

I’m still new at St. Christopher’s. A friend told me recently, “Debra, the first year in a new parish takes... a year.” And every first year is full of highs and lows, joys and sorrows, comings and goings. I’m going to continue to work hard at crafting good sermons, administering the programs of the parish, baptizing new Christians, helping those who die and their families to let go and to grieve well and all the rest of the “things” that priests do. But most importantly I am going to love you. I am going to love you relentlessly, and consistently, and persistently, and even annoyingly. And eventually, I have faith, you’ll love me back. Because, when you get to know me, I’m really quite loveable. And then, hand in hand, together, we will move into our future.

Alleluia! (Said with a wink and a smile...)

Debra+

## Who’s Who on the Vestry

My name is Judy Scharfenberger, and I am proud to be serving my first year on the Vestry.

I was baptized at St. Christopher’s back in 1978, and have been a proud member all my life. My husband Kevin and I were married at St. Christopher’s in May of 2005. I have a daughter, Olivia, who turned 4 in April and son Alex who is 16 months. Both children were also baptized at St. Christopher’s (interestingly, in the same baptismal font that I was baptized in.) You can find me at the 10:00 am services singing my heart out with the choir.

Outside of St. Christopher’s I am a stay at home mom. (Although when my daughter starts school in the fall, I will be looking to go back to work.) I enjoy bowling, playing kickball, and am a member of the Masonic organization for women called Eastern Star.



I am so pleased to be a part of a church with such fantastic people and heart! The friendships I have made have truly enriched my life. I love putting names and faces together, so please come and introduce yourself to me if we haven’t formally met! Blessings to you all!

# Warden's Words

Grace and mercy. The richness of this combination reminds me that God is all around all the time. Last week, I had the pleasure of lunching in the garden with a friend (my summer schedule allows me to sit down to eat!) and we were talking about a major verbal faux pas I had committed the previous week. Symbolically kicking myself for this mistake, we talked about mistakes and forgiveness and I admit to feeling a little self pity, not all that awash in God's presence. I believed that neither grace nor mercy were much in evidence.

Grace is a fascinating thing, showing up in our language and behaviors in multiple ways. Saying grace is a way we bless our food. A significant person may grace us, or bring honor to us, with his/her presence. A grace period is extra time granted to us. Being gracious means showing kindness, and grace itself can mean beauty, goodwill or favor. And who amongst us would not wish to achieve a state of grace? Grace seems peaceful, serene, sublime, somehow internal. Grace appears often in the Bible. For example, 2 Corinthians:9 reads "*My grace is sufficient for thee,*" and in Romans there are many references to grace. Grace is often referred to as divine favor towards humankind. Writers from Shakespeare to Longfellow write of grace. I was not feeling very graced.

Mercy, on the other hand, generally is bestowed on one person by another. Webster says of mercy that it is "...kindness in excess of what may be expected or demanded by fairness; forbearance and compassion." It is a gift. Mark, my husband, reminded me of the famous example of a request for mercy in *The Merchant of Venice* when Portia seeks mercy from Shylock. Shylock asks, "On what compulsion must I?" and Portia answers:

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
**It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:**  
*'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But **mercy** is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
**It is an attribute to God himself;**  
*And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.***



We read in the Bible that God is a merciful God and Psalm 136 tells us that His mercy endures forever. Nonetheless, mercy, like grace, did not seem to be anywhere to be found after my public mistake.

A few days after our garden lunch, my friend called me excitedly from North Carolina to report seeing something new. The spotting was not of an unusual bird nor a beautiful baby. Rather, it was a car from a new taxi company. The name of the company? Grace and Mercy Taxi Company!

Sometimes, I am so inward looking that God has to be very visible to remind me of the God's presence, grace and mercy, all around. Let's keep our heads up and our hearts and eyes open to see God everywhere. She or He shouldn't have to send a taxi.

Prayerfully, Jayne Heffron  
Senior Warden

# Staffing Transitions

There are several staffing transitions among our staff that have already happened or are coming up soon.

Anne Davis, our Children's Choir Director, is moving out of that position at the end of July.

MaryBeth Ansley, our Children's Christian Formation Coordinator, is moving out of that position at the end of August.

Tami Vincent, our Middle School Coordinator, ended her position with the end of the school year.

(Most of you already know that Robyn Slater, our Director of Communications, left that position at the end of March.)

Dorota Pruski, our current Director of Administration, is leaving St. Christopher's to begin seminary in August. She leaves St. Christopher's on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Dr. Gust Olson, our new Parish Administrator, begins his new position with us on July 6<sup>th</sup>. He has been the Administrator at St. James' in Milwaukee for the past six years. He will be full time, Monday through Friday, from 9AM to 5PM.

Anne, MaryBeth and Tami have all capably served in ministry to our children. Our youngest members have been enriched by their passion for Christian education; for finding ways to creatively share the Christian message with young people. Anne, MaryBeth and Tami leave their positions gracefully as St. Christopher's moves away from the practice of hiring parishioners to be on staff.

We are deeply grateful for the time they have been in staff ministry positions in the parish and know that they will continue to find ways to exercise their baptismal ministry here at St. Christopher's.

We would keep Dorota Pruski on until she is old and gray (a long time since she is only 26!), but it appears that God is calling her to ordained ministry and thus, three years of seminary. Dorota begins at Virginia Theological Seminary on August 9<sup>th</sup>. We will miss her many gifts for parish administration; her quick wit and her ready smile. She will be a blessing to whatever parish calls her in the future as their priest.

Finally, Dr. Gust Olson will be with us by the time you receive this *Courier*. Gust comes to us from St. James' Church in Milwaukee, where he was the part-time Parish Administrator for 6 years. We were delighted when he expressed interest in the full-time position we were advertising.

(continued on page 5)



We welcome Dr. Gust Olson !

Gust will be the first voice you will normally hear when you call St. Christopher's. And his will be the first face you see when you come to the church. Gust is a faithful Anglican and Episcopalian. He has spent a large part of this adult life in Canada as an active member of the Anglican Church of Canada (including having been the Senior Warden of the Cathedral in Edmonton, Alberta.). He is an avid student of the worldwide Anglican Communion. involved in just about every other capacity one can be in a church. He remains a very active member of St. James' Episcopal Church in Milwaukee where he has been: on the vestry for six years, a member of the choir, a cellist with their liturgical musical ensemble Joyful Noise, an adult education teacher and involved in just about every other capacity one can be in a church.

Gust has his Ph.D. in Slavic languages from the University of Toronto. He has been the editor of a professional journal in his discipline, and has taught Russian and Russian literature at the university level. He now works in the church because it is where his heart is. He is a deeply committed lay Christian.

Gust and his wife, Hope (the Interim Dean and a Professor in the School of Information Studies at U.W.M.), have one son, Matthew, who is currently working on his doctorate in Vancouver, B.C., Canada.). They also have three cats which the Rector of St. Christopher's does not hold against him.

Gust is very excited about starting his new position as the Parish Administrator at St. Christopher's. And we are very blessed to have him on staff!

Debra+

## Sticky Notes

I have less than a month left in Milwaukee before I leave for DC for seminary. As the next leg of my journey draws near, I have found myself marking certain occasions as my last. My last Vestry meeting at St. James', my last time volunteering at The Gathering, the last time I will publish *The Courier*.

I'm not overly sentimental, but these moments are special ones because they remind me of all the wonderful opportunities I've had in these last 8 years that I've been living in Milwaukee. It is here in Milwaukee that I have become part of a community, fallen in love with the Episcopal Church, heard my call to priesthood, and built lasting relationships. And so I am grateful.

In some ways I am counting down the days, and though I will not miss printer jams or long talks with AT&T about the church's phone bill, I will certainly miss St. Christopher's. I have been blessed with the opportunity to live daily church life here, and I can imagine no better preparation for seminary. Thank you.

Dorota Pruski  
Director of Administration

# Qs from the Pews

*Editor's Note: 'Qs from the Pews' are taken from questions that come up at Coffee Hour or in conversations with the Rector. If you have a Q to submit for this column, please email the Rector or the office.*

*Dear priest,*

*Why do we have a candle always burning in the church? Isn't that a waste of money since no one sees it except on Sunday? Signed, Curious*

Dear Curious,

The lighted candle, inside the glass holder immediately to the right of the altar (as you face it) acknowledges the presence of Christ in the reserved sacrament that we keep in the tabernacle. The tabernacle is the small white box-like structure that is directly in back of the altar. Inside of the tabernacle are pieces of bread (hosts) that have been consecrated from a previous Holy Eucharist. Episcopalians believe that within them is the real presence of Jesus Christ. It's one of the beliefs that define us as a denomination, indeed as Catholic Christians. (Not *Roman Catholic*, just *Catholic*.) So, we don't keep them in a cupboard after they have been consecrated, we keep them in the tabernacle, and we light the candle to let us know that the real presence of Jesus Christ is in our church.

During Holy Week, on Maundy Thursday, the sacrament will be removed from the tabernacle and the candle will be extinguished until the Great Vigil of Easter. At the Vigil, after we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, the extra consecrated bread will be reserved in the tabernacle, the candle lit once again and it will stay that way until the next Maundy Thursday.

Thanks for your question. Signed, the priest

## We're Building a House!

St. Christopher's is partnering with two other churches to build a house with Habitat for Humanity this fall. Watch for further updates!

Outreach Committee



# Building and Grounds Report

The month of June has been a wet, but a thankful one. We have not had to use the sprinkling system much at all this month, saving water as a result. Everything made it through the winter and the trees and grounds have never looked better. No wonder, with all the water we have had. Chris Oberndorfer and his landscape crew have done a great job keeping things looking neat and trim. I would also like to thank Lyn Slater for her help on the Building and Grounds Committee this past year. Her great ideas and dedication has been a real asset to St. Christopher's.



If you have ever had a conversation with Dorota or Debra, they will tell you that some pretty special people keep a watchful eye on the regular maintenance and cleaning of the building. Early in the morning, after work or on a weekend, Mike Schneider is setting up for memorials, making sure the air conditioning is working properly, and moving chairs and tables in the community room for any number of events. He keeps a careful eye on the church at times when we are not there. Gloria and Oscar Bond have been cleaning St. Christopher's for years. They make sure things are clean on the inside of church. We owe Gloria, Oscar, and Mike our thanks for their great work.

During my time on the Vestry, I have had the chance to meet many new parishioners. One person stands out in my mind who dedicates quiet and regular time to St Christopher's. He transplants flowers and grasses, keeps the invading Buckthorn at bay, weeds the beds on the grounds, and even planted new rose bushes in front of the church before the installation of Debra Trakel. This is none other than our own Al Higgins. Al is one of the 8 o'clockers. If you come over to church during a weekday morning or afternoon, you might see Al stacking brush that he has just cleared, or clipping the hedges. If you see Al, please thank him for his thoughtful dedication to St. C's.

Kip Jacobs

# Lazy, hazy days of summer



The lazy, hazy days of summer are upon us. The rain in June has given way to a July that is hot and humid. My flowers are benefiting from the past weeks' rainfall and the abundance of sunshine - my garden is full of color, and I am happy. Planting and tending to my flowers and gardens brings me great joy... and a few more aches and pains, if truth be told!

This past Sunday, I reflected upon the lazy, hazy days of summer that are also upon us at St. Christopher's. The summer rhythm is different. Our Sunday numbers for both the 8:00 am and 10:00 am services are typically smaller than during the "school year" time frame with the busy-ness and fullness of summer activities, family vacations, and differing schedules. Some families even take the "summer off" from Sunday services as the children's programs are on hiatus until the fall.

What a different rhythm from the end of the year church activities including the weeks leading up to the celebration of and installation service for Debra! It certainly was a busy, energetic - even hectic - time of concluding the accomplished work of the Search Committee and welcoming Debra, our new rector, to the community of St. Christopher's.

The installation was a very festive, happy, and glorious occasion for all in attendance. I was moved by the unconditional love of the many parishioners from St. James' who came to show their support and respect, many through tears of sadness, for Debra's calling to St. Christopher's. St. Christopher's parishioners and many more from the greater Milwaukee community, both lay and clergy, witnessed great happiness and joy for Debra. The evening was moving, inspiring, happy and joy-filled as we celebrated together Debra's installation as Rector of St. Christopher's.

And, yet, ever so quietly, we find ourselves in the lazy, hazy days of summer. While the memories of Debra's installation fade a bit, the joy I witnessed that evening is still very real. Debra has been asked by many people, including the Search Committee, why she chose to leave her former parish and come to St. Christopher's. Debra responded that "the most complete answer is that God planted God's call in my heart for you" of St. Christopher's.

Planting and tending to God's call brings great joy to us all... even through the lazy, hazy days of summer.

Kathy Housiaux

**The Great Hunger Book Sale** at All Saints' Cathedral (818 E. Juneau Ave. in Milwaukee) will take place August 5-10, with proceeds going to local and world hunger funds.

Opening night: \$5 donation

Thursday August 5 6-9pm

Friday August 6 through Tuesday August 10 11am - 6pm

Donations needed! All types of books, videos, and CD's accepted up to July 21. For large pick-ups, call (414) 271-7719. Please no magazines, ex-library, Readers' Digest Condensed Books, textbooks or encyclopedias.

# No doubt you've noticed

No doubt you've noticed... On Sunday after the 10:00 a.m. service sorting dollars and cents in the office, you've seen Hannah Pillsbury, our treasurer.

Her math expertise and donated countless hours pouring over numbers to keep us "balanced" is a big responsibility.

She also serves as a reader of lessons and a chalice bearer, and has served as Senior Warden and in children's and youth Christian Formation.

"We sing a song of the saints of God."

In thankfulness,  
Joan Seeger  
and so many others



Hannah at Debra's Installation

Did your son or daughter just graduate from high school? Did you just get that job or promotion that you've been striving for? Are you celebrating a move, anniversary, birthday?

We would like to introduce a special section in the Courier called "How 'Bout That!" Tell us about all the fun and exciting things going on in your life outside of St. Christopher's. Send your "brags" to the parish administrator as you would like them to appear in the Courier!

# The Faces of St. Christopher's: Annual Picnic



JULY MILESTONES	
BIRTHDAYS	
1	Eleanor Lee
2	Matt Coburn Susan Hackl Trudie Kloppenburg
4	Peg Dahlman
5	Barry Blackwell
6	Kip Jacobs Anne Kendall Michael Ruf Jeanne Tanner
8	Greg Reiter David Wells Stephan Young
9	Emily Wigdale
10	Missy Levit Sarah McCabe
13	Allen Gotz
14	George Knight Jennifer Weigel
18	Anne McCabe Lindsey Wigdale
21	Robin Christiansen Roy LaBudde
23	Joseph Fothergill
24	Rob Quirk
25	Molly Allen
26	Kyle Jacobs
27	Robby Schmidt
28	Bill Van Dyke
29	Jim Bedore Ted Purtell Jack Wigdale
30	Piers Gelly
31	Henry Allen Dick Hackl
ANNIVERSARIES	
1	Julie & John Carpenter
2	Lois & Curt Degener
8	Leslie & Chris Latterell
11	Barb & Tim Aik
12	Alexandra & Michael Koroscik
19	Trudie & Bob Kloppenburg
20	Lindsay & Brett Gardner Katherine & Nick Gerrits
21	Katie & Curt Smith Deborah & Willy Brumder
27	Cliff & Janie Asmuth

## ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

7845 N. River Road River Hills WI 53217

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Youth Group: youth@stchristopherswi.org

Caring Ministry: caring@stchristopherswi.org

Website: www.stchristopherswi.org

### Parish Office

Open Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

### Staff

The Rev. Debra Trakel, *Rector*

Gust Olson III, PhD, *Parish Administrator*

John Beardsley, *Music Director*

Anne Davis, *Youth Choir Director*

MaryBeth Ansley, *Christian Formation Coordinator*

Gloria Bond, *Housekeeper*

Michael Schneider, *Building & Grounds Supervisor*

### Vestry – Meets 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Jayne Heffron and Debbie Roesner, *Wardens*

Hannah Pillsbury, *Treasurer*

Bonnie Thomson, *Clerk*

(2011) - Diane Andersen, Darrell Fischer,

Kip Jacobs

(2012) - MaryBeth Ansley, Nick Geimer, Jeni

Piper

(2013) - Ginger Browne, Diane Eisen,

Judy Scharfenberger

### Committee and Ministry Contacts

**Altar Flowers:** Roz Krause

**Altar Guild:** Roz Krause, Mary Jane Perry

**Acolytes:** Dee Hodnett

**Building & Grounds:** Kip Jacobs

**Caring Ministry:** Lauralee Uihlein

**Endowment:** Erik Andersen

**Finance:** Hannah Pillsbury

**Flower Guild:** Hattie Purtell, Helen Sheen

**Gifts Committee:** Lyn Slater

**Labyrinth:** Catherine Davidson

**Memorial Garden:** Jeanne Tanner

**Newcomers:** Debbie Roesner

**Outreach:** Mark Heffron, Steve Petrie

**Personnel:** Kathleen Stokes

**Prayer Chain:** Chilly Braun, Kathy Housiaux

# ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Monthly Newsletter of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

### The Holy Eucharist

Sunday 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.  
Thursday 7:00 a.m.

Outdoor Labyrinth - open to the public, weather permitting

The Rev. Debra Trakel, *Rector*



*Christianity is not just a religion...it's a way of life.*