

THE COURIER

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

April 2010

The Rector's Writings



I have a Cairn Terrier (think: Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*) named Jamie. I suppose if I get a new dog someday she or he will be named “Christy,” but that’s for the future. For now, and hopefully for many years, I have Jamie. She and I take two daily walks together. If you have ever had a terrier you will understand that not to take her for two daily walks is to incur terrier-wrath. Never a good thing. Jamie is now almost seven and so when the weather is very bad (think: blizzards or significantly below zero weather) she will grudgingly forego a walk. But all other days, even when the weather is on the cusp of awful, as it has been mostly since this past December, Jamie and I take our twice daily walks.

One of the walks that we take sometimes is around a large retention pond located several blocks from my condo. We can’t get to it during the winter but in the spring we go back. Jamie usually loves walking around the pond but recently she was unusually frisky. It’s spring and new smells and sights and sounds abound! She jumped from vole hole to vole hole. She ran back and forth in the flat land next to the pond sniffing the raccoons, coyotes, wild turkeys, and assorted critters that are re-populating the area. She was absolutely beside herself with excitement and joy; yipping and skipping, tail wagging and breathless as she ran back and forth from her explorations to me to tell me what she was finding. It was lots of fun to watch her in her unbridled delight in discovering all the new puppy gifts that awaited her nose!

And I got to thinking, as we slowly trudged back home after an hour of walking around the pond, that it’s like that between us and God, especially during this post-Easter season. It’s not just the “Alleluia’s” that come back after Easter—it’s all of the gifts that God gives us in our post-Resurrection lives; those gifts that are always there, but that we see in sharper relief as we look at them through the lens of Easter. I was thinking, as my thoughts slid into prayer, that I don’t skip and yip and almost wriggle out of my skin at God’s gifts to me, as Jamie does at God’s gifts to her. But maybe I should. I suspect that my delight in God’s many gifts would, in and of itself, delight God.

You are my newest and most precious gifts from God. Although I think it would be unseemly for the new Rector of St. Christopher’s to be seen skipping, much less yipping, in the hallways of our church, know that I am doing so in my heart. And please forgive the occasional skip and yip. I’m practicing expressing my delight in the divine gifts: you.

Debra+

Transition Committee

**A warm welcome and sincere thank you to the Reverend Debra Trakel
for answering St. Christopher's call to be our new Rector!**

The Rector Search – A Retrospective

Basking in the excitement and celebration of the Reverend Debra Trakel's first Sunday with us, we feel it is a good time for us to review our search process and share what we think made it successful.

After Scott Stoner's May 2008 departure, the Vestry organized listening sessions in homes and at church that generated parishioners' concerns and hopes. With the official commissioning of the Search Committee in March 2009, the "listening" intensified with the all-parish History session, large and small group gatherings, one-on-one conversations, and the "Views from the Pews" mini-surveys. We worked hard to ask the right questions and carefully listen to your answers as we prayerfully formulated our written Parish Profile of who we were and who we wanted to become with our new Rector. Then, we carefully designed our process to evaluate candidates, including the types of questions we would ask them at each stage.

From the beginning, we agreed that we needed the full participation of every Search Committee member and that it would be imperative to honor and respect every person involved in any part of the process if we were to be successful. Through openness, honesty and careful listening, we fostered an atmosphere that allowed challenging conversations and healthy resolutions of differing opinions. As the process moved forward and intensified, the trust already established provided a comfort level for resolving issues. Through multiple (and sometimes marathon!) sessions of candidate reviews, we assessed resumés, references, answers to our written questions, taped and written sermons, and candidates' personal and parish websites. We then conducted phone interviews and ultimately personal interviews with finalists. Our trust and comfort level remained. At the end, we joyfully and enthusiastically presented Debra Trakel to the Vestry as our candidate for Rector.

Now, as we "transition" back to a more normal parish life with a renewed enthusiasm for all that is St. Christopher's, we ask all of you to get into the OPEN boat to row with us. Although there are many paddling styles, we can all paddle. We can help each other but we must move together – fully, respectfully, lovingly. Several of the many candidates resonated with our slogan. Now let's row together and be true to what we say we believe: "Christianity is not just a religion... it's a way of life."

Susan Hackl – 352-1028 (home)
263-8174 (work)

Outreach

Join us for our next opportunity to serve at **The Gathering on Saturday May 8, 2010**—the day before Mother's Day. Make it a family affair: Come with your children (5th grade & above only, please) so they can experience the importance, value and rewards inherent in helping others in need. Bring your Mom (sure, Dad can come too) and show her how well you have learned that lesson, or come alone and become a part of our "family" of volunteers and guests. It's a 4-hour commitment (9:30 AM-1:30 PM) you'll feel good about for a long time. More details to follow in weekly bulletins and announcements. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Harry & MaryBeth Ansley (hfansley@msn.com; 414/540-9992). A sign-up sheet will also be posted on the Community Room bulletin board soon.

Warden's Words

This weekend was a milestone for our church. When the next chapter is written in the history of St. Christopher's there will be a notation that on 11 April 2010 The Reverend Debra Trakel performed her first Eucharist as rector.

Milestones are, literally, markers along the highway that indicate how far down a road you have gone. James and I play a game called Mille Bornes. It is a card game whose objective is to reach a 1,000 miles by collecting mile marker cards. Other players can give you a flat tire or cause you to stop but through a quick draw of cards you can find yourself back on the road to 1,000 miles.

Our first few miles with Debra will be ones we will always remember. Like any road trip the first few moments can range from jubilant or hair-pulling nuttiness. But as the trip progresses things calm down and those first few moments are forgotten (for better or worse).

On our car trips it starts off with someone wanting to be navigator, another person taking the role as short-order cook another as entertainment coordinator. Sometimes that is all one person but soon enough everyone has designated themselves to a certain portion of the car and to certain responsibilities. Then it all changes. Yep. Some where along the road someone falls asleep and if they were the navigator then someone else takes over. By the end of the trip we are working together in new ways. We have developed our own special code for getting things done.

As April moves into the rest of 2010 we are starting a new road trip with Debra. The Vestry, Search/Transition Committee and the congregation have been working together to make it to the end of this long trip, and we have made it. We are all falling out of the car, road weary but excited about the destination we have arrived at.

Sometimes getting out of that car there is a bit of a let down. There is a feeling of "Really? This is it?" But then someone spots a cool bug on the ground or sees the sun setting behind the truck stop. There is a subtle shift and soon the driver isn't driving anymore and now there is a whole new adventure in store and the driver is just the passenger on this journey.

The next few months we will be having many firsts with Debra. And with many firsts we will have great joy but also a few skinned knees. It is our hope that the skinned knees don't deter anyone from the journey. It is our hope that the milestones we see along the way are milestones of joy. And if we run out of gas, or get a flat tire we know that it won't be long before the tire is fixed or AAA is comes with a can of gas. Does the Holy Spirit work for AAA? Only time will tell.

Tom Napper



Little Lambs Day

Join us to honor and celebrate the newest members of St. Christopher's at Little Lambs Day on Sunday May 2nd at 10 a.m. We welcome the eight babies baptized in 2009 and their families to share a special Sunday service, a blessing from Mother Debra, and sweet treats at coffee hour.



To all the Altar Guild and Flower Guild members:

Thanks to everyone for your help during Holy Week. As always, the church was beautiful for Easter and all who contributed made this possible. It was truly a team effort.



A special thanks to MaryBeth Ansley and Catherine Davidson who organized so much during Holy Week, and to Dee Hodnett and LeAnne Drives who hosted the elegant reception after the Easter Vigil. Thanks also to Marisa Roberts and Hattie Purtell, who made sure the flowers were perfect for our Easter celebration.

You are all important contributors to the Altar Guild and the Flower Guild. We thank you so much for your time and continued dedication.

Roz Krause and MJ Perry

EASTER AND CHANGE

It is 5:15 the morning of Good Friday, and my German Shepherd Carly and I are doing our annual segment of the watch. The amber wine in the glass chalice reflects the dim light of the Meditation Room and the flickering flames of the tea lights. There is a softness about this plane and this time that prompts me to introspection and reflection, and perhaps that is why I treasure this time during Holy Week. It is a time for quiet - a time to pray, to meditate, to “be still and know that I am God.” Yet, even as I page through the Book of Common Prayer and Hymnal, reading familiar prayers, parts of services long forgotten, and verses of my favorite hymns (yes, too many years in the church choir, I’m afraid ☺) I realize that change is coming. The moon and stars that were so bright when I entered are dimmer now, the sky not quite so black. Slowly, gradually, yet with a relentless insistence, the dawn is coming. The outlines of trees appear and, in the east, a rosy glow - the promise of a bright and beautiful morning.

I think, for me, the 5:00 to 6:00 watch time is representative of what Easter holds for us, and how we are called to approach it. From the darkness of Good Friday to the light and celebration of Easter Sunday, this holy time is really about change. It’s about the painful changes that Jesus experienced between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, and then about the glorious changes that we celebrate at Easter. It is about the change that we experience as we walk that familiar road of the Triduum, and it is about the changes that we, as Christians, are called to make as we continue our spiritual journey. The stories of Easter are stories of change - for the friends and followers of Jesus from long ago, and for us, as we open ourselves to the working of God in our lives. “Be still and know that I am God” is not a call to freeze ourselves in space and time. Rather, it is an opportunity for us to reflect - and then to move on, into the light, joy - and change - that is Easter.



Bonnie Thomson

Q's from the Pews

Dear Priest,

So, why don't we have a Confession of Sin on the Sundays after Easter? Does the church think that we have stopped sinning or something? Signed, Still a Sinner

Dear SAS,

The Book of Common Prayer has a rubric about the Confession of Sin for both Rite I (the 8AM rite) and Rite II (the 10AM rite). Rubrics are those helpful little notes in italics in the Prayer Book that tell us what is or isn't permissible for us as we craft worship in our church. The rubric regarding the Confession of Sin states, "On occasion, the Confession may be omitted." (See page 300 in Rite I and page 359 in Rite II).

So, post-Easter is for St. Christopher's, and for many churches, that "occasion." The church does not think that any of us have stopped being sinners. But during the season of Easter (Eastertide) we shift our focus to Christ's forgiving love, and so liturgically we omit the Confession during this season. In our church, each of the seasons has a focus and we respond in how we worship to that focus. The easiest example is our Lenten focus more directly on our sinfulness. That's a shift of focus from its preceding season of Epiphany where we focus on Christ's gifts to us.

We don't just pray during Sunday worship, of course. If we offend God, the appropriate response is to tell God that we are sorry as swiftly as possible. And we do not need to be together corporately to tell God that we are sorry.

Many Christians, your Rector among them, do a daily Examen. An Examen (also called an Examination of Conscience) is a structured way of looking at one's behavior from the day and asking for God's forgiveness if we have fallen short, or giving thanks to God if we have managed to do good during the day. Again, we do not need to be together to look at our individual lives.

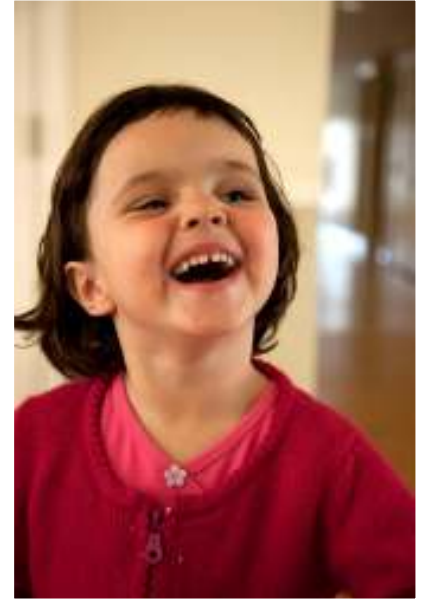
If you feel that you have significantly moved out of alignment with God, the church provides for the individual experience of the Sacrament called The Reconciliation of a Penitent (colloquially called "Confession"). You will find this in the Book of Common Prayer on page 447. I am always available to folks who wish to participate in this individual experience of the Sacrament. And the BCP reminds us that for the confessor (the priest or bishop) "the secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor, and must under no circumstance be broken."

But, don't worry about our corporate experience at St. Christopher's. The season of Easter is over after Pentecost, May 23, and the Confession of Sin will return on Sunday.

Signed, the Priest

Editor's Note: 'Q's 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.

The Faces of St. Christopher's: Holy Week and Easter



Sticky Notes

I teach Sunday School at St. James' and last Sunday our "craft" was to make an Easter envelope in which we put (on colorful paper, of course) Easter words. As we were making our lists of Easter words, I heard words like "new life" and "blooming flowers." I also heard words like "my cat," but that's another story! Anyway, Easter is a time of new life and of change. Children understand that well. And this year in particular, so do I.

There are many changes going on in my life right now. In three months I will begin seminary at Virginia Theological Seminary, so I'm beginning to prepare myself for some major life changes. In the office, change is everywhere as well. With Robyn Slater leaving the office, I have had to adjust to new hours and responsibilities. Mother Debra's arrival has been an exciting change for everyone at St. Christopher's, myself included. I have a new boss from whom I will learn a lot over the next three months, and you have a new pastor with whom you will journey over the next many years.

Change can cause me anxiety and stress sometimes, but this Eastertide is different. Although there is change all around me, I feel a sense of calm because I know God is at work. I pray that this time of transition and change brings you peace as well.

Dorota Pruski

APRIL MILESTONES	
BIRTHDAYS	
2	Mike Winters
3	Penny Enroth
5	Kathie Eilers Kathleen Mahoney
6	Cissie Darien Christine Murphy
7	Stephanie Klas Jack Vincent
8	Cameron Lindsay Susan Martin Emma Smith
9	James Scott
10	Michael Belcher Jackson Bruce Scott Weigel
11	Willy Brumder Grace Piper Hope Piper
12	Brett Christiansen
13	Mary Thickens
14	Anthony Neils
15	John Roethle
16	Jim Peck
17	Greg Norman
18	Fred Hansen Joyce Reinhold
19	Olivia Scharfenberger
20	Roz Krause
21	Diane Andersen Chase Ferrer
23	Robby Coburn M.C.F. Lindert Kelly Peterson
24	Lynne Belcher LeAnne Drives Wendy Peterson
25	Jayne Heffron Austin Schmidt
26	Jason Thurow Ann Wood
28	Alberta Darling
29	Veronica Minahan
ANNIVERSARIES	
9	Tom & Wendy Gebhardt
28	Jay & Donna Miller
30	Kay Campbell Owen & Mary Jane Perry

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Caring Ministry: caring@stchristopherswi.org

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Staff

The Rev. Debra Trakel, *Rector*

Dorota Pruski, *Director of Administration*

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.

Tom Napper and Jayne Heffron, *Wardens*

Hannah Pillsbury, *Treasurer*

(2011) - Diane Anderson, Darrell Fischer,

Kip Jacobs

(2012) - MaryBeth Ansley, Nick Geimer, Jeni

Piper, Deb Roesner (Jr. Warden-

elect), John (Chip) Slater

(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

Transition Committee: Laura Gough, Susan Hackl

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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.