



# THE COURIER

The Newsletter of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, River Hills, WI March 2011

## THE RECTOR'S MUSINGS

Her name is "Mama." I'm sure she has some other impossibly lovely southern name such as Pearline Belle or Blanche Mae. But I don't know it. I know her only as "Mama." (Her late husband, by the way is, of course, "Daddy.")

Mama is regal. She holds herself like the matriarch of the family that she is. She is utterly and completely beautiful in her 89 years. Her soul fairly shimmers from her eyes and her family system still quivers under her touch.

When I visited my friends in Atlanta recently I went twice to visit Mama, who lives in a "mother-in-law's" apartment in my friends' home. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to spend time with this holy woman who still works hard at her spiritual life; at 89 she knows that God is still working in her.

Mama said to me, "Tell me, if you'd be willing to do so, the story of how you came to be a minister." Mama is a Southern Baptist and "priest" is not part of her lexicon.

So, I told my faith story to this intently listening woman who pinned me with her gaze and moved not a muscle as I spoke. When I finished, she said simply, "Hearing your faith story was a blessing to me." And I did not for even one moment doubt that she meant it. But what I knew is that she had first blessed me with her quiet desire to hear my story. She who felt blessed was a blessing to me.

Blessings are much in my life. I got to bless little Avery Smith (Catherine Davidson's first grandchild) when she was only three days old. She probably will not remember me touching her forehead with the sign of the cross, but I will. And forever as I know little Avery (and soon I'll get to baptize her!) I'll know that my hands offered her first blessing to her.

I went to the hospital to see a woman who had recently had surgery. Still in the ICU, and fairly well medicated with drugs that were still altering her consciousness, she whispered to me with some incoherence. But when I asked if it would be okay if I blessed her, she nodded her assent and burst into tears as I touched her head and said the ancient words, "I bless you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It is a fearsome thing to offer God's blessing to someone.

Priests are given the privilege to bless in the name of the church at our ordinations. Much is made of our first blessings. In fact, it can almost be dangerous as people tend to drop on their knees in front of us seeking one of those first blessings while we're still figuring out what it means that we are now priests. Those first blessings drive the point home: we aren't in Kansas anymore!

One of the most tender and intimate moments of my work week comes when I lift my hand over you and offer you God's blessing, and my own reminder to remember: whose you are. I wish you could see your faces as you are blessed.

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But here's the thing: the ability to bless and be blessed is not limited by ordination. We are all called to be blessings to one another. And Lent provides us with the opportunity to think about ways in which we might be able to exercise our rights and responsibilities as Christians around offering blessing to one another. Might we hold back an unkind word? Might we listen to someone just a bit longer, or with a bit more intensity, than we were inclined to listen? Might we offer a gentle hand to someone who needs it? Might we offer God a prayer for the one who tells us they feel estranged from God? Might we even be a blessing to ourselves and forgive ourselves for things done and left undone, as God forgives us? Might we tell someone whom we love that we do, in fact, love them? Might we listen with an open heart when someone tell us that they love us?

Our world is full of blessings—abounding, pushed down and overflowing with them. We have only to reach out our hands, and the blessings of Almighty God will fall into them. We have only to reach out our hands to another, and the blessings of Almighty God will touch them, too.

My prayer for each of you is that this is a Lent replete with blessings—offered and received. You are blessings to me.

With love and my blessing, Debra+

## Pastoral Care

During the interim period between Rectors, the vestry made a decision to move from two priests to one priest. This decision was made for financial reasons. We could not and cannot afford two priests at St. Christopher's.

However, the decision was made without any kind of planning for what this would mean in the life of the parish: What it would feel like to have the *ministry time* available from only one priest? How the parish would need to adjust in expectations and behavior to this new part of the history of St. Christopher's?

It has been a difficult adjustment for the parish. In general, people have expected the same level of ministry, the same amount of time availability with one priest as with two. Over time, these expectations will, no doubt, change. But in the meantime, some folks are feeling that they are not being cared for as they need to be.

Consequently, the vestry and I are exploring ways to perhaps bring another clergy person (either a Deacon or another Priest) into our ministry mix on a very part time basis to only do some pastoral care. Certainly this does not mean that I will not be doing pastoral care, but would be sharing that ministry with someone else.

Please know that any time you let me know that you need something from me I will do my very best to meet that need as swiftly as possible. I am grateful to each of you who have called me, drawn upon my pastoral skills, and let me come to know and care for you. If that ministry is shared with someone else, you can always ask to see the Rector and I will be there for you as quickly as is humanly possible.

Let us continue to pray for one another. Debra+

# Warden's Words

I have acquired a new appreciation for what is commonly termed “Writer’s Block.” Each month, it is my privilege to share my thoughts and musings with you in the Courier. This may seem a simple enough task—sit down, pray a bit, thoughts will magically appear and write. It can’t be THAT hard. My children have one word for that—Challenge!

Debra writes sermons weekly—elegant, often humorous, poignant and thought provoking. She at least has the readings and gospel to give her material to work from. What could I possibly have to say to compete with that?

My predecessors have written eloquent stories about their life experiences that tie into the current life of the church. It is humbling to turn inward and reach for something significant to share. Ideas and musings that provide food for thought. Something people will care about reading. This is a challenge that I have avoided and here I am at the eleventh hour—Gust needs this to go to print and I am feeling the pinch of my procrastination.



So this month, I ask you to think about tasks that seem simple enough on the surface but grow in magnitude. I know all of you can relate to putting off tasks. Tasks that we think we have plenty of time to get to and keep pushing to the side. Tasks that can be challenging, ask us to dig deeper, that ask us to think hard. Tasks that ask us to expose ourselves and inner most thoughts. Tasks that humble us, tasks that start off small, unchallenging yet grow as we avoid them until “tomorrow.” Tasks that as we venture into uncharted waters, ask us to take a chance, tasks that ask us to have faith. Tasks that ask us to believe that we can.

There for me is the magic word: BELIEVE. As we head into Lent, we are asked to take a journey through the darkest and brightest days of Jesus’ life. To have faith that it will all work out in the end—we all know the story so of course we know the ending. But we still embark on the journey of Lent anyway—because we believe. A dear friend gave me a wonderful book called *Believe* as I began my journey as Senior Warden. It has inspiring messages that provoke thought and reflection for the here and now. And what can be. Here are a few snippets:

Believe you are here for a reason.  
Believe you must take your chance.  
Believe when others might not.  
Believe there is always, always, always a way.  
Believe you might be that light for someone else.  
Believe that the little things aren’t little.  
Believe in love and everything it touches.  
Believe that together we are better.  
Believe that the best is yet to be.

So in addition to thinking about all those tasks that we put off until tomorrow, tasks that seem insurmountable, I ask you to believe. Believe in all that is St. Christopher’s and all that we can be. Believe.

Debbie Roesner, Senior Warden

# Qs from the Pews

Dear Priest,

I am new to the church and I see some people crossing themselves as part of the service. But not everyone does. What does this mean and why do some people do it, and others not?

Signed, new member

*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 new member:

The sign of the cross is something called a "piety." It's a ritual hand motion made by members of many branches of Christianity and is often accompanied by a spoken or mental recitation of "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The motion is the tracing of the shape of a cross on one's own body, starting (open handed) by touching your forehead, then touching your chest, then your left shoulder followed by your right shoulder. Many people in the Anglican church then come back to the middle of the chest for the "Amen." This is the method of "signing oneself" used in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and some Lutheran churches. The piety is rare within other Christian traditions. People will cross themselves during the final blessing on Sunday, or often when they first come into church and kneel down to pray before worship. Some churches have holy water available as people come into church. St. Christopher's does not follow this practice. You will also see some people crossing themselves after having received Holy Communion.

Western Christianity also employs what is called the "small sign of the cross" in which a small cross is traced with the thumb over the forehead, lips and chest while whispering the words, or saying them silently, "May Christ's words be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart." You will often see people doing this as we begin the proclamation of the Gospel.

Pieties are optional in worship. Different people do different things that help them in their worship experience. If making the sign of the cross helps you get closer to God, good. If not, you don't ever need to do it. But if you have not tried to do it, you might want to just to see how it feels.

One of the fun things in a church is to see our littlest members as they watch their parents make the sign of the cross and try to emulate them.

Thanks for the question! Signed, the Priest

# Shrove Tuesday: Chili, Pinata, and Burying the Alleluias



## Chocolate (or the Lack Thereof) and the Book of Common Prayer

“What are you giving up for Lent?” This was a common question in our household as Ash Wednesday approached. My usual response was “Brussels sprouts” and my brother’s was “church.” In the end, I suspect we gave up something on Ash Wednesday, kept our Lenten discipline for a couple of days, and by the time Holy Week rolled around, I’m not sure we even remembered that we had had a Lenten discipline, let alone what it was. Fortunately, my spiritual journey has taken me beyond giving up Brussels sprouts (though I still don’t eat them during Lent—or at any other time, for that matter), and Lent for me is a time both of “giving up” and of a more intentional approach to that spiritual journey.

For many years now, I have given up chocolate for Lent. While that is probably good for my diet, giving up chocolate is something that reminds me, on a daily basis, to stop and think about the purpose of Lent. I believe, as Episcopalians, we are called during Lent to pause and reflect upon what is necessary in our lives, and what is nice but not necessary. We are encouraged to simplify, and to be introspective—honestly examining those places that we often do not go in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. So, for me, it is not the absence of chocolate itself that is important—it is that no chocolate is a constant reminder of what I’m supposed to be doing in Lent.

One of the things that most helps me with the introspection part of all of this is *The Book of Common Prayer*. During Lent, I make a conscious effort to spend some time each day with the prayer book, and most recently I’ve found that the “Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families” are a great way to incorporate some kind of structure into this part of my Lenten discipline. The Devotions can be found on pages 138–142 of the BCP. I force myself to read them aloud (the dogs think I’m crazy, but what do they know?), because I find that makes me actually listen to the words. I’ve included below the one for the early evening, as I find that one is particularly meaningful for me:

### In the Early Evening

O gracious light,  
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,  
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,  
and our eyes behold the vesper light,  
we sing your praise, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,  
O Son of God, O Giver of Life,  
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

### A Reading

It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus’ sake. For the same God who said, “Out of darkness let light shine,” has caused his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation—the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 4:5–6*

*Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.*

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## Lenten Wednesday Nights

Since no one has signed up to make soup for Lenten Wednesday nights, we will cancel that part of our Wednesday night Lenten program. There will be no Wednesday night soup and bread suppers.

Instead, our services will begin promptly at 6:30 PM. We will be using the program *Via Media*. *Via Media* is targeted for faithful Episcopalians who want a language to help them articulate their faith, or for folks who have left other religious traditions and would like to understand their new faith.

Episcopalians have never been comfortable with faith by decree. We're more comfortable with faith by conversation. So, prompted by a video of Episcopalians in conversation with one another, we will be in conversation ourselves about what our faith means. The focus will be on the development of a shared language, not on trying to convince someone that they are wrong and we are right. This is, I think, a helpful corrective in our state's acrimonious atmosphere right now.

During this Lenten program we will celebrate your questions and your doubts. We will be asking contemporary questions about an ancient faith using our collective intelligence. With six billion people in the world is it even possible that there could be only one answer? Come and seek with us.

We will end each evening with Compline, the night time prayer of the church.



## Chocolate and the BCP

(continued from p. 6)

*The Lord's Prayer*

*The Collect*

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen*.

As I've said before, I think The Book of Common Prayer is such a gift, and Lent is a perfect time to be intentional about exploring its riches.

Bonnie M. Thomson,  
Junior Warden

# Children's Ministry

February has flown by for our St. Christopher's children, and we've been busy following Jesus. Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, we've heard His call to become "fishers of people." We even went fishing (with magnets to help us)! It would be great to be reminded at home that we're trying to catch people for Jesus by our prayer and example.

We also learned about Jesus' healing miracles and those wonderful parables. Jesus has really planted good seed among us, and we want to be the soil that makes it grow and be fruitful. We're going to watch out for those birds, weeds, and thorns.

Last week we learned about Jesus walking on the water and calming the storm. He can calm the storms in our lives too. Jesus also fed the multitude (5,000) with a few loaves and fish, so we're making a display of 5,000 Cheerios to give us an idea what 5,000 hungry mouths might look like.



Now we're gearing up for Lent—a time for praying, fasting, and giving. We'll be finding ways to do all of these as we enter into this holy season so we'll be ready for Easter joy.

Mary Heyn,  
Christian Formation Co-ordinator

## Saint Patrick's Prayer for the Faithful

May the strength of God pilot us.  
May the power of God preserve us.  
May the wisdom of God instruct us.  
May the had of God protect us.  
May the way of God direct us.  
May the shield of God defend us.  
May the host of God guard us against  
the snares of evil and the temptation of the world.  
May Christ be with us.  
Christ before us.  
Christ in us.  
Christ over us.  
May your salvation, O Lord, be always ours  
this day and forever more.



Attributed to St. Patrick, Bishop and Monk (March 17)

*Thanks to Helen Sheen for bringing this wonderful prayer to us.*

# Caring Ministry

St. Christopher's Caring Ministry cares about you. If you would like to share in caring about others, please join us.

Our ministry reaches out to serve in several different ways:

- \* Prayer
- \* Funeral assistance
- \* Meals to those in short-term need
- \* We are licensed by the Bishop to take Communion to the home-bound
- \* Supportive care through sending cards and/or flower delivery
- \* Soup/cookie sales to support causes other than those of the parish Outreach Committee
- \* Other needs that may arise and can be helped by the Ministry

Do you have a little or even a lot of time to offer? Please let us know. Contact the church office for a follow-up.

Helen Sheen,  
Member of the Caring Ministry

## 101 Reasons to be an Episcopalian -- Part Two

Here are eight more reasons to be an Episcopalian, taken from the little book entitled *101 Reasons to be an Episcopalian*. It's put out by Morehouse Publishing and is a compilation of reasons from folks in dioceses across the church.

9. Anglicans do good deeds to increase understanding of God, not out of fear or to earn admission to heaven. (Robert L. Neal III, Diocese of Chicago.)
10. Asking questions about our faith is expected. In the Episcopal Church, God doesn't get upset if I wonder why some things are as they are. And God doesn't get upset if I suggest that some things should not continue as they are. (La Reverenda Martha Sylvia Ovalle Vasquez, Diocese of Delaware.)
11. At our best, Episcopalians can respectfully disagree about a great many things—and still break bread together. (Barbara Tensen Ross, Diocese of Oregon.)
12. I'm an Episcopalian because of the incredibly profound understanding of authority in the Anglican Communion. The three-legged stool—with its stout legs of Scripture, tradition, and reason, supported by (but also firmly joined by) the seat of our experience and prayer—is perhaps Anglicanism's most glorious contribution to theology. (Paul M. Johns, Diocese of Olympia.)
13. We believe that love without justice is cheap sentimentality. (Carter Heyward, Diocese of Massachusetts.)
14. My four-year-old son has attended the Episcopal Church since birth. He sings the Alleluia from the fraction anthem as easily as the theme from "Blue's Clues." (The Rev. Rachel Endicott, Diocese of Olympia.)
15. When asked if he was saved, Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple replied, "I have been saved, I am being saved, I hope to be saved." That understanding of faith, hope, and humility reinforces me as an Episcopalian/Anglican. (Dean George L. W. Werner, Diocese of Pittsburgh.)
16. We do not give simple answers to complex questions. Instead, we offer tools that help people develop a sustaining faith. (B. Lance Moody, Diocese of Oklahoma.)

Crew, Louie (2003) *101 Reasons to be an Episcopalian*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.

# Habitat for Humanity Project

Did you know that St. Christopher's has been involved with Habitat for Humanity these past 6 months? Yes, we have. We have been working with Christ Church in Whitefish Bay and Three Holy Women in Milwaukee to build a house on Milwaukee's north side. "Our" house is on the 3800 block of N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street with several other Habitat homes being built in that same area.

Several members of our parish have been working many Saturdays under the amazing guidance of Bill and Mitzi Roy, house-leaders who are members of Christ Church. Richard Uihlein, Steve and Meredith Petrie, Diane Eisen, Mark Heffron, Judy and Kevin Scharfenberger, and Hannah

Pillsbury are among the many people who have donned tool belts on cool and sometimes very cold days. Most recently, drywall has been put up, walls primed and painted, floors laid and room and closet doors hung.



The required skills for helping out were a willingness to work hard and a sense of humor. All other skills were taught or shown during a working Saturday. I, for one, came to Habitat with very little knowledge of home repair let alone home building (I'm the proverbial renter). This experience, as all my other Habitat experiences, has been in incredible one. It's fun but even more than that, it's invigorating and fulfilling to be part of something larger within the Milwaukee community. These houses become someone's home and because there are several

Habitat houses being built in the same general area each year, they seem to transform and enliven a larger area.

Even if you haven't been one of the worker bees, you have been a part of this experience. We, as a community, helped not only with our blood, sweat and hammers, but we were involved financially with this project. So THANK YOU St. Christopher's!

Hannah Pillsbury



## March MILESTONES

### BIRTHDAYS

1	Polly Beal
2	Meredith Bay Jackie Greeley Grace Latterell Nicholas Weseman
3	Carla Bartlett Deanna Braeger Jenny Mahoney
4	Dick Rostad
5	Bill Minahan
6	Brittany Lopez
7	Carter House
10	John Mahoney Steve Stevens
11	MaryBeth Ansley
13	Briana Lopez
14	Mike White
15	T. J. Gebhardt
16	Becky House
19	Kathryn Peterson
20	Reagan Schmidt
21	Brian Jones
22	Nicholas Holmes
24	Natalie Evans Mason House
25	Alex Scharfenberger Fred Stratton
27	Dottie Aring Liza Perry
28	Billy Schmidt
29	Betsey Dunleavy
30	Susie Kasten James Klas Kevin Scharfenberger
31	Mary Louise Roozen

### ANNIVERSARIES

3	Becky & Brian House
20	Nikki & David Etheridge

## ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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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*  
Mary Heyn, *Christian Formation Coordinator*  
Gloria Bond, *Housekeeper*  
Michael Schneider, *Building & Grounds Supervisor*

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

Debbie Roesner and Bonnie Thomson, *Wardens*  
Florence Parnegg and Susan Hackl, *Clerks*  
(2012) - MaryBeth Ansley, Jeni Piper  
(2013) - Ginger Browne, Diane Eisen,  
Judy Scharfenberger  
(2014) - Diane Andersen, Darrell Fischer

### Committee and Ministry Contacts

**Altar Flowers:** Roz Krause  
**Altar Guild:** Roz Krause, Mary Jane Perry  
**Acolytes:** MaryBeth Ansley  
**Building & Grounds:** Kip Jacobs  
**Caring Ministry:** Lauralee Uihlein  
**Endowment:** Erik Andersen  
**Finance Subcommittee:** Charlie Krause  
**Flower Guild:** Hattie Purtell, Helen Sheen  
**Labyrinth:** Catherine Davidson  
**Memorial Garden:** Jeanne Tanner  
**Outreach:** Steve Petrie  
**Prayer Chain:** Chilly Braun, Kathy Housiaux

# ST. CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Dated material

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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.*