

The Messenger

2014, ISSUE 1

JAN – FEB 2014

Rector's Corner: Can We Be "Evangelical"?

In June 2008, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said: "Who(se) are you? Why are you here? What are you doing about it? That's a shorthand way of thinking about our identity and vocation as Christians. It's also a way of leading us as individuals and Christian communities into thinking about our mission -- or better, our partnership in God's mission. Mission literally means "sending," and for us it means what we're here to do and be. In a large view, it's about partnering in building the Reign of God. In daily life, you and I get countless opportunities to engage in that mission."

"The Anglican Communion has been talking and teaching about Five Marks of Mission for more than 20 years," she continued, "yet most Episcopalians have never heard about this framework for our participation in God's mission of healing the world. Those five marks of mission include:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

"They are a brief summary of the ways in which you and I live out our baptismal covenant and engage in God's mission of reconciling the world (BCP, 855). They include what some have traditionally thought of as evangelism, pastoral care, Christian education, Christian political advocacy, corporal works of mercy, and stewardship of the garden in which God has planted us."

Taken together these five marks of mission remind us that it takes the whole Body of Christ, i.e., the whole Church, to engage the Mission of God. None of us can engage them all in their fullness. We need one another and the gifts we bring to accomplish what we can in serving the Mission of God.

Please note that these are "marks" of mission. That means that they are the signs that the work of God is alive and well in our midst. To the extent that each of us is "marked" by one or more of these characteristics indicates how deeply we have engaged the mission and ministry of Jesus.

Three of these marks are fully manifested in the work of our Jubilee Center for Ministry (Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, Parishioners' Outreach, Folks of a Seasoned Age, Breaking Bread Together, and Environmental Stewardship).

The works of the Center also served to proclaim the good news of the kingdom as Luke 4 explains, "He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor . . . to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord." Yet the first two marks remain probably the biggest challenge for St. Mark's. How effective are we are at proclaiming good news (apart from outreach) and inviting people into a new relationship with God?

Evangelism is a scary word to most Episcopalians. It conjures up images of pentecostal tent meetings and Bible thumping preachers, of altar calls and questions like, "Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?" These things somehow offend our rather reserved Episcopalian ethos – after all, aren't Episcopalians known as God's "frozen chosen?"

Hardly. In fact, it was Anglicanism that gave birth to John and Charles Wesley's fervor for the Gospel in their efforts to bring some heart into what had become a rather heady religion. It is Anglicanism that accounts for the largest growth in Christian communities in Africa. It is Anglicanism that teaches there is a "middle road" between the heart and the head, between the zeal of reformers and catholic tradition. It is that middle road that creates real, genuine safe space for all who seek Christ as the "big tent" where all are welcome as they make their way to Christ amidst the challenges of their lives.

Why, then, is it so difficult for us to discuss evangelism? Perhaps it is not evangelism in and of itself (without it, there would be no church or any denomination), but the stereotypes and images we have associates with the word over decades. Evangelism is little more than this: *taking advantage of opportunities to share what you know about Jesus with others.*



PARISH EVENTS

Soup Sale
Vegetable Beef
Jan 10
Parish Hall

Popcorn Cinema
Sponsored by Folks of A
Seasoned Age
Jan 15 1:00 PM
Parish Hall

Prayer for Christian Unity
Sponsored by Lewistown
Ministerium
Jan 20 12 Noon
St. Mark's Church

Vestry Meeting
Jan 21, 5:30 PM
Parish Library

Breaking Bread Together
Dinner
Jan 23, 5:30-6:30 PM
Parish Hall

Soup Sale
Chicken Corn Soup
Feb 14
Parish Hall

Vestry Meeting
Feb 18, 5:30 PM
Parish House Library

Knit & Knot
Sponsored by Folks of A
Seasoned Age
February 19 1:00 PM
Parish Hall

Breaking Bread Together
Dinner
Feb 27 5:30-6:30 PM
Parish Hall

(Continued on page 3)

The Jubilee Ministry Center at St Mark's

Mother Hubbard Expresses Gratitude for Continuing Support



Parish leadership and the volunteer staff of Mother Hubbard's Cupboard wish to express profound gratitude to all of the contributors and donors who helped to support The Cupboard during the holiday season. While the generosity of many people toward the needy often increases during the Christmas Holiday Season, this Christmas seemed to outstripped the already generous supporters of The Cupboard. Financial and in-kind donations were overwhelming and have placed The Cupboard in a good position as we begin the new year. Among the innovative ways in which the people of Lewistown area rose to the occasion was a food drive sponsored by our own police department: a police cruiser was filled to over-flowing with freshly purchased foodstuffs, which were donated to The Cupboard. What a great example of what happens when members of the community join hands to overcome a serious problem. Regrettably, hunger does not take a vacation, especially during the cold and bitter winter months when people's limited resources are rechanneled to things like utility/heat bills. It is just at these times that the work of The Cupboard is needed and appreciated most. While the generous donation of this holiday season will make a dent in the problem of "food security" in our community, Mother Hubbard's work, sadly, is never done.

Christian Formation at St. Mark's

Some time ago, a group of high school seniors sat in a circle exploring what it means to have faith. One said "belief." Another said "trust." A third ventured a description that others may have thought of but hesitated to share, not wanting to



**To Know,
To Show,
To Grow
in Christ**

seem dismissive of their peers or their teacher, "I think faith is basically choosing to accept something in spite of the fact that it can't be seen or proven." The student continued, "It's what you need to have to believe in God or heaven, because no one can prove that they exist."

Some students looked at me nervously when this comment was made, but far from feeling defensive, I brightened at the opportunity to engage my students in a discussion about the value of faith — one that must include questioning at the boundaries of what we can't see or prove.

Were I to tell students that the core of religious faith must simply be accepted on the sole authority of my word as a priest or of the writings in a collection of scriptures such as the Bible, their reactions would range from polite skepticism to outright disregard.

The response "because I told you so," if it were ever a satisfactory answer to the curious-minded, is simply inadequate today. And that's a good thing. I have very little use for blind faith. I believe that "show me" is not only a fair request to make, but a healthy one as well.

As a part of the discussion of religious faith with my students,

Breaking Bread Together Dinner



Our monthly Breaking Bread Together Dinner for January and February will be held on Thursday, **January 23 and February 27** from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM. As always, volunteers are welcome for both preparation and service.

Folks of Seasoned Age



Folks of a Seasoned Age continues its weekly exercise program on **Tuesdays at 3:30 PM** in the Parish Hall. Please note that if schools close because of inclement weather, exercise classes are cancelled for that day.

Also on the calendar:

- Popcorn Cinema—a program of classic film shorts and fresh made popcorn (coffee and desserts, too!) Jan 13, 2014 1:00 PM
- Knit and Knot—A knitting/crocheting workshop for beginners and experienced alike February 19, 2014 1:00 PM

In the future — a BYOG day (Bring your own game!)

I asked them to tell me about something that is important to their lives that they can't see, hear, touch, smell, taste or prove. At first there are a lot of blank looks. Then one hand raises, tentatively. "Loyalty?" We ponder this for a second. Then another hand raises. "Justice." And then, "Love." And we're off.

We debated whether any of these things can be indisputably proven by people's experience of their effects. In the end I tell my students that what they're describing sounds very much like my faith. Not blind faith, but experiential, informed and questioning faith. I have had this faith affirmed on numerous occasions by the strong sense that I am in the presence of holiness as I have worshiped, prayed or served others. It is a faith rooted in the descriptions of the character of God found in both the old and new testaments that I have tried to use as an example for the choices I make in my life.

It is a faith that regularly seeks a deeper understanding of how I can use the gift of my life to be a blessing to others. The kind of faith that attracts me and that I find exciting to talk about with my students is a faith that is two parts action for every one part belief. While doctrines about God, the origin and course of our lives, and possibility of redemption for human shortcomings are vitally important, I am confident that what people of faith choose to *do* about their convictions in these areas is that matters most.

It is through the practice of faith that it becomes most real, and because of that, I welcome questions about it. Is there any God out there to hear the prayers of those who seek a relationship? I suggest praying and then paying attention to what we sense, hear and feel afterward. The 20th century theologian and author C.S. Lewis once said about prayer, "It doesn't change God — it changes me."

Does going to church really accomplish anything? Does reading and reflecting on sacred writings have any actual power to inspire people of faith to be agents for peace, love and healing in our world? These are not hostile questions but rather questions that can transform a person's life if they are treated with care. And the best answers will come, not in the self-assured pronouncements of religious leaders, but in the *example of a lively faith* that is alert, probing and responsive.

Annual Meeting Called for Sunday, January 26th

The Annual Meeting of St. Mark's Episcopal Church has been scheduled for **Sunday, January 26, 2014** at St. Mark's Church in the Parish Hall immediately following celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. A festive brunch will follow the meeting.

A G E N D A

(pending Vestry approval)

1. Call to Order
2. Opening Prayer
3. Approval of the minutes from the 2013 Annual Meeting
4. Presentation, Discussion, and Acceptance of Annual Reports for Fiscal Year 2014.
5. Old Business
6. Presentation and Discussion of Renewed Vision Statement
7. Presentation, Discussion, and Acceptance of the Budget for Fiscal Year 2014
8. Election of Vestry Members
9. Election of Parish Delegates/Alternates for Diocesan Convention (June 2014)
10. New Business
11. Closing Prayer
12. Adjournment
13. Fellowship & Brunch

All members of St. Mark's Episcopal Church are entitled to voice and vote during the Annual Meeting.

Any member of the parish desiring to enter items for the agenda should submit them to the Rector or the Senior Warden no later than 3:00 PM, January 21.

Did You Know . . .

That the first Vestry for St. Mark's Church was elected at a "Meeting of contributors to the Protestant Episcopal Church at Lewistown" on July 5, 1823 and consisted of Amos Strode, James W. Dowell, Christopher Marks, James Kellogg, Jr., Elias W. Hale, John Hoyt, David W. Huling, William P. Eliott, Robert Buchanan, William A. Patterson.

They met as a Vestry in the Courthouse for the first time on July 26, 1823 and chose Amos Strode and James Kellogg, Jr. as the first Churchwardens of St. Mark's Protestant Episcopal Church. Preparations for acquiring property and building a church promptly began at this first meeting.

— from the Minutes of the proceedings of the Vestry of St. Mark's Church, Lewistown.

"Rector's Corner" (continued from page 1)

Biblical evangelism is personal. The Word was made flesh. The gospel is embodied in the person of Jesus. The gospel is the message; the gospel is also the life of Jesus. In Christ, the message and the messenger are indivisibly one. Jesus desires to disclose Himself; He is the Evangelist in that He continually is communicating and drawing us into dialogue with God. He communicates to real people, and He commissions people to continue communicating personally.

Gustavo Gutierrez put it this way: "To evangelize is to communicate this joy; it is to transmit, individually and as a community, the good news of God's love that has *transformed* our lives." (emphasis added)

For this reason, the Vestry undertook some serious study over the last several months to assess how we are and can more deeply become a *transforming congregation*. This is what will undergird our discussions and decisions in the coming year. I ask that you not sit on the sidelines and that you get involved in whatever way you can as we lay foundations for the future of St. Mark's. Keep abreast of what's happening. Don't be afraid to offer an opinion. And most of all, have the strength and the courage to communicate just how God is transforming you – here and now.

David +



Evangelization is the heart of the church's mission.



CLPI

How many
ADULTS will
we baptize
in the next two
years?



*The answer to that question
lies in YOUR hands.*

For the person who has everything . . .



We are often at a loss to know what kind of gifts to buy our friends and loved ones on special occasions.

For some people (especially those who “have everything”), the standard gift won’t cut it. Nothing in the shopping mall catches our fancy.

Here is a suggestion. It may not seem that expensive or sound very novel, but believe me, it works every time. It’s one of those gifts that has great value but no price tag. It can’t be lost nor will it ever be forgotten. No problem with size, either. It fits all shapes, any age, and every personality. This ideal gift is . . . yourself. Don’t forget the unusual value of kindness.

That’s right, give some of yourself away:

- Give an hour of your time to someone who needs you.

- Give a note of encouragement to someone feeling down.
- Give a hug of affirmation to someone in your family.
- Give some time to someone who is lonely.
- Give a meal to someone who is sick.
- Give a word of compassion to someone who has suffered a loss.
- Give a second chance to the fallen.
- Give a deed of thoughtfulness to someone who is often overlooked.
- Give a gentle response to the frustrated.

Covering all the *one another* commands of the Bible (and there’s a lot of them!) is the umbrella of kindness. Kindness braids mercy and grace, humility and gentleness all together. Kindness gives grace, requires humility, and asks that we think of others

before ourselves.

Ever notice that kindness is most appreciated when life has gone sideways? When you’re having “one of those days,” kindness speaks that thoughtful word and draws you back like a lifeline.

Who should the world look to as a model of kindness but the body of Christ? Unfortunately, ask the man on the street how he would describe the Christians he knows and I dare say *kind* would not be his first or even his second response. I say we change that.

Kindness is something we can do today. A gentle response. Being the first to forgive. Giving the gift of time, compassion, and thoughtfulness. In ordinary ways, we can give ourselves away and, by doing so, model God’s *agape* love. Remember 1 Corinthians 13:4—“Love is kind.” Look for ways today to give *ordinary* kindness, and you’ll find there’s nothing ordinary about it.

Choir Begins Preparation for Lent and Easter

Joyce Hart, Director of Music and Organist at St. Mark’s, recently initiated mid-week choir rehearsals for the parish choir. The choir meets every two weeks to prepare music for the upcoming Sunday services and to prepare for the special seasons of Lent and Easter. Rehearsals begin promptly at 6:00 PM on Wednesday evenings. (January 15 and 29, February 12 and 26).



The only requirement is a willingness to dedicate one’s effort to the uplifting of our congregation in song. One need not be a member of St. Mark’s to participate. We have a special need for male voices!

If you are interested or know someone who might be interested in lending their voice to the choir in praise of God, please contact Joyce Hart or Father Zwifka.

Parish Receives Diocesan Grant for Evangelism

Father Zwifka recently received confirmation that St. Mark’s was awarded a diocesan Commission for Congregational Development Operational Grant in the amount of \$7,360 to engage in efforts to bring the message of St. Mark’s mission and ministry to the wider Lewistown community.

The grant proposal that was submitted focused on outreach by direct mail, upgrading our web presence and sustaining involvement in community organizations and affairs. As the award letter said, *We affirm your continuing mission and ministry with joy and enthusiasm. Our desire would be that we could recommend that the full amount of your grant request (\$10,000) could be awarded; however, reality is that the total amount requested by 19 parishes exceeded the budgeted grants funds available by \$78,000. . . May God continue to bless and enrich the good work you do to God’s glory and the welfare of all people.*

Grant funds are usually disbursed on a quarterly basis beginning in late January or early February.

The request for this grant grew out of discussions with St. Mark’s Vestry as how best to reach out into the community in ways that will not only “tell our story” but also invite others to share in the mission and ministry of Christ as it is lived out in our church community. Plans currently call for two general direct mailings and four targeted mailings during 2014. Also included is a planned upgrade to our website and intensification of our use of social media.

“Even though we have received this financial support for our efforts,” Father Zwifka told the Vestry at its December meeting, “the key still remains personal one-on-one contact and invitation. The work of evangelization still remains the responsibility of each and every disciple in our congregation.”

Coming Soon!

Don’t miss the Chicken Corn Soup Sale on February 7th! Mark your calendars AND get your orders in early. Donation and order sign-up sheets will be on the bulletin board in the parish hall in mid-January.



Thinking About Legacies

There are so many legacies from which we draw. Parents oftentimes leave us with a powerful set of values and a strong legacy of service and acceptance of others. Even our faith creates in us a legacy of strong biblical knowledge and curiosity and humility. Our parish has invested in us legacies of affirmation and opportunity, of unconditional love and friendships that stand the test of time, of nurtured faith and tested values and growing stewardship. As we focus on all the blessings left us by others, by our church and by our life

experiences, we must ask ourselves: What legacy will I leave? Hopefully these will include the hope of a strong faith, the enduring power of nonjudgmental love, and perhaps even the desire to make of our lives a difference in the world. As part of this, consider how including the parish in your end-of-life giving plans will provide a legacy to future generations seeking to grow in faith and wisdom. *Please remember St. Mark's in your will.*

Operation Understanding Grant to support Parishioners' Outreach

Elta Lauver, St. Mark's Treasurer, recently received word from the diocesan *Operation Understanding* that The Jubilee Ministries Center at St. Mark's was awarded a grant of \$1,070 toward its Parishioners' Outreach program. Operation Understanding is a diocesan commitment to provide grants to parishes

that are deeply involved in outreach ministries that feed, clothe, and provide energy assistance to the needy. They also fund programs for disadvantaged children. Grants are made possible through the generosity of churches and parishioners who contribute to Operation Understanding through the *Alleluia Appeal* which takes place during the Easter season.

Call for Lay Ministers

When someone says the word minister, most Episcopalians immediately think of priests and deacons. The fact remains that there is a wide variety of ministries that can be exercised by those who are not ordained. These range from the liturgical ministries of acolyte and lector/reader to Lay Eucharistic Visitors. Some of these require training and official licensing from the Bishop. Others do not. Does something in your heart tell you that you would like to do more? Do you know of someone in our parish with gifts that are not being fully exercised? We are in need of effective ministers in every area of activity: liturgical ministries, Sunday School teachers/aides, administration and more. Won't you consider offering a few hours of your time to move St. Mark's forward? Please contact Deacon Loretta or Father David for more information. If you won't do it, who will?

Lent Begins March 5th

We've barely taken down the Christmas decorations and already, we are planning for our observance of a holy Lent as prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer. While a more detailed description of our communal Lenten observance will be forthcoming, here are a few tidbits so that you can mark your calendars well in advance.



There will be **three** services on **Ash Wednesday, March 5th**: 7:30 AM (Liturgy of the Word and Blessing and Distribution of Ashes) 12 Noon (Eucharist with Blessing and Distribution of Ashes) and 7:00 PM (Evening Prayer with Blessing and Distribution of Ashes).

On **Thursdays** from 12:05 to 12:55 PM, Father David will conduct a teaching series, "Embracing the Prophets." Six sessions will include a video presentation by Walter Bruggeman, a noted Scripture scholar and small group discussion.

Deacon Loretta Collins will host a series **Just for Women** on a weekday evening that includes a simple supper. Dates and times are yet to be determined.

The Church will be open for private prayer and meditation every weekday morning from 8 AM till 12 Noon when all present will join for **Midday Prayer** (Monday thru Thursday) and **Stations of the Cross** (Friday).

Mark your calendars now!

Scripture Readings for the months of January & February

Jan 5 — Epiphany (observed)	Jan 12—Feast of the Baptism of the Lord	Jan 19—Second Sunday after Epiphany	Jan 26—Third Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 60:1-6	Isaiah 42:1-9	Isaiah 49:1-7	Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalms 72:1-7,10-14	Psalms 29	Psalms 40:1-12	Psalms 27:1,5-13
Ephesians 3:1-12	Acts 10:34-43	I Corinthians 1:10-18	I Corinthians 1:18-31
Matthew 2:1-12	Matthew 3:13-17	John 1:29-42	Matthew 4:12-23
Feb 2 — Feast of the Presentation of the Lord	Feb 9 —Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	Feb 16— Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	Feb 23—Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
Malachi 3:1-4	Isaiah 58:1-9a, (9b-12)	Deuteronomy 30:15-20	Leviticus 19:1-2,9-18
Psalms 84	Psalms 112:1-9, (10)	Psalms 119:1-8	Psalms 119:33-40
Hebrews 2:14-18	I Corinthians 3:1-9	I Corinthians 3:10-11,16-23	I Corinthians 4:1-5
Luke 2:22-40	Matthew 5:13-20	Matthew 5:21-37	Matthew 5:38-48

✠

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Year A in a Revised Common Lectionary Cycle focuses primarily on the Gospel of Matthew.



JANUARY—2014

ROTA



DATE	SERVICE	PRESIDER	HOMILIST	USHERS	LECTOR	ACOLYTE	CHALICE BEARER
01/05/14 Epiphany	9:30 A.M. H.E. Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Nancy Lamb & Elta Lauver	Deb Vaughn	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Mark Kaler Crucifer: Michael Aitkin	Phyllis Sikorsky
01/12/14 Baptism of our Lord Healing Service	9:30 A.M. H.E. Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Deacon Loretta Collins	Jeff and Maggie Wilson	Deb Vaughn	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky Crucifer: Michael Aitkin	Deb Vaughn
01/19/14 Epiphany 2	9:30 A.M. H.E. Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Bill Wision Ralph Aitkin	Robin Wilson	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Mi- chael Aitkin Crucifer: Mark Kaler	Blair Hannon
01/26/14 Epiphany 3 ANNUAL MEETING	9:30 A.M. HE Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Jeff & Maggie Wilson	Cynthia McKinley	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Colby Hagan Crucifer: Lexie Kuhns	Phyllis Sikorsky



FEBRUARY—2014

ROTA



DATE	SERVICE	PRESIDER	HOMILIST	USHERS	LECTOR	ACOLYTE	CHALICE BEARER
02/02/2014 Epiphany 4	9:30 A.M. H. E. Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Nancy Lamb & Elta Lauver	Deb Vaughn	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky Crucifer: Michael Aitkin	Phyllis Sikorsky
02/09/2014 Epiphany 5 Healing Service	9:30 A.M. Morning Prayer	Deacon Loretta Collins	Blair Hannon	Jeff and Maggie Wilson	Robin Wilson	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Colby Hagan Crucifer: Michael Aitkin	
02/16/2014 Epiphany 6	9:30 A.M. H.E. Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Bob and Bill Wilson	Deb Vaughn	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Mi- chael Aitkin Crucifer: Lexie Kuhns	Deb Vaughn
02/23/2014 Epiphany 7	9:30 A.M. HE Rite II	Fr. Zwifka	Fr. Zwifka	Fred McKinley Ralph Aitkin	Cynthia McKinley	SD: Blair Hannon Acolyte: Phyllis Sikorsky & Colby Hagan Crucifer: Mark Kaler	Phyllis Sikorsky

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*The voice of the Gospel
in the Episcopal
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Valley since 1823.*

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