



Genesis



Messiah's Newsletter

March 2009

The Church of the Messiah
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Bob Hayward
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Phyllis Tyler

From the Interim Rector:

Lent is not a season to trifle with. Its disciplines signify little if it does not lead us more deeply into evangelism.

We are now well into Lent, our Pancake Supper and Races and Ash Wednesday behind us now. Lent calls us to genuine introspection. The Church asks us to take the five weeks in Lent to prepare for Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter. Historically these weeks of Lent were a time of special instruction for those finishing their preparation for baptism. Lent was a time to realign their lives with God's law, with God's love and with God's grace. God calls us to confess our sins, to give up habits, routines and even a lifestyle that does not square with what we profess and to take up new habits, disciplines and routines that will draw those around you into the church. Lent is not a season to trifle with. It is a time in this mortal life to set things right with God, with ourselves and with those we love just so that our lives might be consistent with what we believe and the church thereby to increase.

I bid you all a most blessed Lent, a time to reconnect with God, to achieve an honest assessment of how the Spirit is moving in our lives and then to surrender to that work of God's spirit; to walk with this congregation through Holy Week and its special liturgies - Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

God knows our heart and loves us as much as God loves his son, Jesus. God is gentle and God will give us rest, thereby enabling us to sing once again on Easter Morning with unaffected joy,

Alleluia! Alleluia!

With hope, love and joy in Christ,

Fr. Steve

Lenten Service Project: “Nets for Life”

The Sunday School classes at Messiah invite the congregation to learn about and support our Lenten Project called **Nets for Life** (www.netsforlifeafrica.org). The Church of the Messiah will join many congregations across the diocese of Maryland to hear about the **impact of malaria** on children and adults across Africa, in places like Liberia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ghana. Approximately 2 billion people, or 40% of the world’s population, live in areas threatened by malaria outbreaks. 3,000 children per day in African countries die from malaria.

But malaria is one of the deadliest **preventable diseases** on the planet. **Nets for Life** are long-lasting insecticide-treated nets that can be used around beds at night to **prevent night feeding mosquitoes from transmitting the malaria infection**. There are effective drugs that treat malaria. However, access to good health care is not available for many people with malaria. Prevention tools, like bed nets, are important to the public health response.

\$12 will pay for one bed net. Donations towards Nets for Life are one way we can support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are goals that the Maryland Diocese, the Episcopal Church in the US and the Anglican Communion have pledged themselves to. To learn more, you can see an MDG wall poster downstairs or visit the diocesan website. In the meantime, please listen for announcements about Nets for Life from Sunday School students and other parish members. A donation box will be available for 5 Sundays in the Tower Room, and a news table will be downstairs. **Questions?** Please see Kimberly or Heath Dewrell after the 8:00 AM service or Melinda Fowl after the 10:30 AM service.

Self-Study Group Meetings (See the Self-Study Report on the next page)

The Self-Study Committee will conduct three group discussion and activity sessions on the following dates and topics. The sessions will be held on Sunday mornings from 9:00 - 10:00 am. Please plan on attending these sessions in order to have your views represented in our parish profile.

March 8th - “What are you looking for in a Rector?”

March 22nd - “What is (should be Messiah’s role in the community?”

March 29th - “Looking to self and diversity in transition”

Anonymous Gifts Received

Messiah was recently blessed to receive two anonymous gifts. One gift was designated for use in the Furnace Fund to finance much needed recent repairs to our boilers. The other gift was given for use in the general operating budget. We are very grateful for the generosity at work within our congregation and for the commitment to Messiah’s ministry made tangible by these acts of faithful giving.

What’s New in the Church Library

Worren’s *Uncommon Prayers - Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated* - Edited by Elizabeth Geitz

Day by Day Devotions - Two more great 7 minute devotions for kids - Karyn Henley

Who’s Who in the Age of Jesus - Geza Vermes

Eternal Seasons - a spiritual journey through the church’s year - Henry Nouwen

Self-Study Committee Report #2

For everything there is a season...(Ecclesiastes 3)

Messiah's Self-Study Committee continues to move forward with the vestry's charge. There was a great response to our short survey. Overwhelmingly, members decided to complete a questionnaire. Distribution began on Sunday, Feb.22. Please pick up your copy from the back of the church (it will help save money on postage) and return it by March 8. There was also enough interest in the small group format that we are planning **small group sessions for interested members throughout March** to include this information-gathering option as well. We will announce more about these small group sessions as soon as possible.

The ongoing **Parish Timeline Activity** had its kick-off on February 8th.

Now Lent is upon us. This is a time for stillness and reflection while we continue to move forward. May we be reminded during the Lenten season of the very renewal and new life in Eastertide.

During the self-study process, when we just wish we could hurry up and get a new rector, have a party and then get on with things, we rather find ourselves reaching for spiritual tools of fasting, study and prayer we traditionally use for Lent and Holy Week as we wait for the Glory of Easter. We are doing without, being called forth into the uncertainty of studying ourselves, being pulled into deep listening with each other, sharing our spiritual gifts, waiting and watching and then waiting some more. We are in the place we should be at this time, doing the work we should be together.

Please ask about things that you don't understand! State your opinions so we can have another point of view. Messiah's growth and development, its overall well being as a parish, demands this from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

O God of creations and transformations, inspire this community by your perpetual creativity. Help us to reach deep within ourselves to discover the abundant resources you have placed among us, that we might meet with joy the challenges ahead. This we pray, trusting that all things are possible through your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Treasurer Needed.....

But thankfully, **Mike Dowd** has graciously volunteered to be our interim treasurer!

We still need someone for the permanent position.

If you have any questions about the responsibilities of the treasurer, feel free to ask someone on the Finance Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

In His service,
The Finance Committee

Vince Vanneman
Carol Waldhauser
Jean Becker
Michele Steppe

Keep those home fires burning!

Did you see it? Did you see the awesome little "furnace" in the Tower Room as you walked into the church? Thanks to Randy Steppe's handiwork we have the perfect little vehicle in which to gather your contributions to our **FURNACE FUND**. In order to ensure heat this winter, the Vestry has had to authorize \$14,000 for emergency repairs, so we really need your help. You can just drop your loose changes into the "chimney" and listen to the beautiful sound it makes as it enters the tin can inside! The Gooding twins were generous enough to demonstrate this for us during announcement time in December. If you prefer to make a larger cash donation or to write a check, you may use the pink envelopes located on the side of the "furnace." Put your name on the outside and drop it into the chimney or into the offering plate. Donations made this way will appear on your next statement. We are already off to a great start--so far we have received \$8,949.01! You can check our progress by the "thermometer" on top of the "furnace." Let's get that temperature rising!!

The 225th Convention of the Diocese of Maryland

This year's Diocesan Convention will be held on May 1st and 2nd at the Marriott Hotel in Hunt Valley. The organizing committee has selected "Building Upon A Sure Foundation" as the theme of this 225th annual gathering of clergy and laypeople. Messiah's vestry has elected Heath Dewrell to serve as our Primary Delegate and Phyllis Tyler to serve as Alternate Delegate should Heath be unable to attend. Fr. Steve will also be attending to represent Messiah at this important event. Information about the convention is available at www.ang-md.org/convention.php where more information about resolutions and activities will be posted as it becomes available. Please pray for our Delegates and the entire Convention as they go about the important work before them.

Parish Life

The most important thing we can do for our Parish Life at the time is to give the Self-Study Committee our input by filling out the Parish Questionnaire and attending the group discussions in March (Information on them is on page two of this issue of Genesis)

Other upcoming Parish Life events include our April Pot Luck Lunch which is on Palm Sunday, April 5 and our spring Tea Fellowship which will be held on Saturday, April 18th (yes, its the Saturday following Easter), at 3:00 pm in the lower hall. Ruth Anthony and Devon Ellis will be hosting this tea and request that you sign up by April 5th. To sign up either see Ruth or Devon, or call the parish office by April 5th.

Wednesdays in Lent...

Each Wednesday during Lent, beginning Wednesday, March 4th, there will be

Eucharist at noon, Rite I

7:00 pm Evening Prayer with Homily

At 7:30, following the service, there will be a Lenten program led by Ira Gooding, Senior Warden.

During Lent we will be reflecting on God's mission on earth and how we can answer the call to ministry through affirmation of and commitment to the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), a global plan to confront poverty, disease and injustice. Each Wednesday evening session will begin at 7 pm with Evening Prayer in the Sanctuary and then continue with study and discussion, beginning on March 4th.

Share Price Break for CSA "Early Birds"

The early bird does get the worm, at least down on the farm! Messiah's 5th season as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Pick Up Site for One Straw FArm will begin Monday, June 8th and continue for 24 weeks through Monday, November 16th. The price for a share is \$485 if you sign up by March 1st and \$550 afterward. Brochures with more information are available in the Tower Room.

One Straw Farm is the largest organic vegetable farm in Maryland and donates 1 share to Messiah for every 10 signed up at our site - shares we are able to use to help feed our community. If a share is too much for you and your family, you can split it with a friend. For more information call Joan Norman at 410-343-1828.

Financial Pledges for 2009

Thanks to the generosity and commitment to faithful stewardship found here at Messiah, we have collected a total of \$95,068 in financial pledges for 2009. We were blessed to receive a total of 49 pledge commitment forms, 5 of which were submitted by members who had not pledged in the past. This decision to make a pledge of financial support is a meaningful and tangible act of commitment to God's mission and ministry at Messiah, and we are deeply thankful for all who have prayerfully chosen to do so.

Despite this remarkable generosity, the 2009 totals represent a 12% decrease from Messiah's 2008 pledges. The accompanying chart reflects 7 years of pledging history at Messiah, and a quick glance shows that we are now in the second consecutive year of declining pledges following two consecutive years of pledge growth. Although our pledging totals are better than they were several years ago, the current trend is disconcerting.

The sense of uncertainty naturally generated by both the transitional period

at Messiah and the global economic environment are likely behind this trend, but the basic principles of faithful Christian stewardship have not changed. First, we believe that everything we are and everything we have are gifts from God, our creator. Second, we believe that Christ calls to us through both word and example to respond to God's abundance by sharing our gifts. Third, we are committed to doing so in a spirit of joyful gratitude and compassionate generosity. Please take a few moments to meditate and pray over these three principles as a way of examining your own current stewardship decisions.

If you have not yet submitted a financial pledge for 2009, I ask that you prayerfully consider it. It is not too late to do so. It is also possible to increase your pledge at any time by contacting the Parish Administrator (Carolyn Janowski: 410-426-0709 or messiah.episcopal@verizon.net). We at Messiah are committed to answering God's call to mission and ministry in this place, and we have faith that the resources required to answer that call can be found among us.

Peace,
Ira Gooding
Senior Warden

