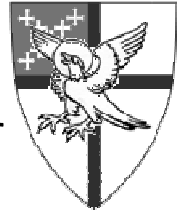




THE MESSENGER



Parish News of St. John's Episcopal Church, Saginaw, Michigan.

Volume 26, Issue 2

February 2009

The Messenger is published monthly by St. John's Episcopal Church, 123 N. Michigan Ave., Saginaw, MI 48602. This publication is mailed to our parishioners at no cost to them.

Rector's Comments:

I believe it would be all too easy, perhaps understandable by some, but clearly regrettable, if we were to simply cut-out expenses, just have the doors open on Sunday, visit our own sick and be present to bury our loved ones. While this sense of church may seem natural and comforting, I believe it is a far cry from our Gospel mandate. Such a notion of being church, I believe is not only too confining for the Holy Spirit to really move, it is at best about maintaining – just “getting by” – more realistically, this notion of being church is about preparing to end. 2008 has not only been about “staring down” such a temptation, but daring to create a new chapter of the story that is our shared mission here at St. John's.



Together, we have seen great turn-around this past year, both figurative and literal, with what we believe are the essential elements of our ministry: worship, our spiritual life & community, the care & service to others, and our shared leadership. Building upon the momentum that started in 2007 and even earlier, we have continued to build upon the natural strengths and core values of our parish. Even with Saginaw continuing to experience dramatic decline and ever-limiting resources, our parishioners have continued to meet the challenges and growing needs of our community with even more creativity and commitment. So much so that we even were able to turn the nave around to better understand the challenges and opportunities of what is needed in order to meet the needs of others now and in the years ahead! **My message to you is that we cannot afford to stop now! We must continue to turn around St. John's.** We must move beyond maintenance and *reclaim* our mission to *be* the Church today and for tomorrow.

In this past year, we have continued to grow from *vision* to *implementation*, putting into motion the priorities

established from our Vision Process. This year we not only continued to learn together, we also began the courageous and creative work of trying new approaches to meet the challenges and opportunities we have already articulated. In no small way, we have experimented boldly, shared what we experienced and have taken that knowledge to prepare ourselves for where God is moving us next. As we enter 2009, we are now half-way towards our bold and courageous goal of eliminating our recurring deficit within four years. The financial planning for our future certainly continues and this is a great start; but we can't stop now! We now also know better what is involved with making our priorities a reality; beginning with a church that is accessible to all people regardless of physical limitation. Now we are broadening our conversations and continued discernment for the future, seeking the counsel and observations of our Bishop and other congregations within our diocese and beyond. As we begin 2009, I feel that our path is clearer and so I say again, we cannot afford to stop now. In the year ahead, we will continue to reframe our structures, imagine possibilities for tomorrow and prayerfully consider how best to respond to God's call to be the Body of Christ at this time and in this blessed parish of St. John's.

Above all else, thank you! 2008 has been a good year – spirit-filled and spirit-led, busy and even intense at times, challenging and clearly rewarding! The number of increased pledges and even more, the number of our volunteers serve as testimony to the power of faith and dedication. Please believe me when I say, it makes a great difference, so don't stop now! As limited as our resources are now, this *is*, I believe, the opportunity God is giving St. John's to be *re-created* and to indeed be that “vibrant urban new old church.” I am proud and humbled to serve as your rector and be a part of the leadership in this parish.

Daven Clinton

Join us Wednesdays in Lent for our Soup-Study Series!

Beginning after the 6pm Eucharist on Ash Wednesday, February 25th and continuing each Wednesday throughout Lent, join us for a time-honored custom of our Lenten Soup-Study series. Our Lenten Series this year will feature the book, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, by Diana Butler Bass. Come see why this critically acclaimed book continues to call so much attention. In addition to the discussion group, there will be an opportunity to hear from the author herself when she comes to Saginaw for a short conference in April! Diana Butler Bass is an Episcopal laywoman, noted scholar of religious sociology, and nationally known expert in current Church trends – both within and beyond the Episcopal Church. This book is widely available through your favorite retailer, or if you wish, contact the parish office at info@stjohns-saginaw.org or by calling 793-9575 and we can reserve you a copy for \$12.

About the Book

For decades the accepted wisdom has been that America's mainline Protestant churches are in decline, eclipsed by evangelical mega-churches. Church and religion expert Diana Butler Bass wondered if this was true, and this book is the result of her extensive, three-year study of centrist and progressive churches across the country. Her surprising findings reveal just the opposite—that many of the churches are flourishing, and they are doing so without resorting to mimicking the mega-church, evangelical style.

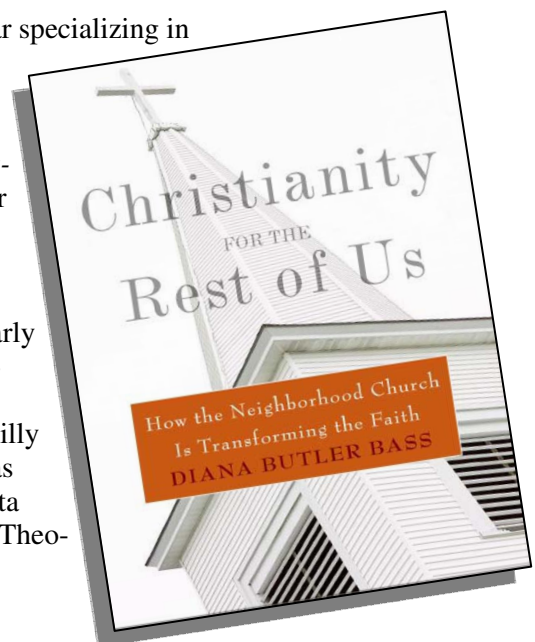
Christianity for the Rest of Us describes this phenomenon and offers a how-to approach for Protestants eager to remain faithful to their tradition while becoming a vital spiritual community. As Butler Bass delved into the rich spiritual life of various Episcopal, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran churches, certain consistent practices—such as hospitality, contemplation, diversity, justice, discernment, and worship—emerged as core expressions of congregations seeking to rediscover authentic Christian faith and witness today.

This hopeful book, which includes a study guide for groups and individuals, reveals the practical steps that leaders and laypeople alike are taking to proclaim an alternative message about an emerging Christianity that strives for greater spiritual depth and proactively engages the needs of the world.

About the Author

Diana Butler Bass is an author, speaker, and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture. She holds a Ph.D. in religious studies from Duke University and is the author of seven books including the bestselling *Christianity for the Rest of Us* published in 2006. Her much-anticipated next book, *A People's History of Christianity*, will be released in March 2009 from Harper One.

Diana is currently Senior Fellow at the Cathedral College of the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. She regularly consults with religious organizations, leads conferences for religious leaders, and teaches and preaches in a variety of venues. From 2002 to 2006, she was the Project Director of a national Lilly Endowment funded study of mainline Protestant vitality. She has taught at Westmont College, the University of California at Santa Barbara, Macalester College, Rhodes College, and the Virginia Theological Seminary.



Happy Birthday

- 1 Hunter Kostal
- 2 Pat Lynes
- 2 Mary Spence
- 4 Marion Petzko
- 4 Elizabeth Trogan
- 6 Frederick Sunderman, IV

- 9 Emily Kostal
- 9 Marc Baillargeon
- 13 Paige Seibert
- 13 Kathryn Spence
- 13 Mark II Wilson
- 18 Sarah Elin
- 18 James Joswiak
- 18 Louise Small
- 19 Richard Sedwick
- 22 Louberta Weathersby
- 25 Al Vondrasek
- 26 Christine Schaub
- 27 Hiram III Becker
- 27 Connor Shinaberry
- 28 Betty Galbraith
- 28 Marcia Hoffman

Thank You

Thank you to Ellen Redfield and Linda Buzon for preparing such wonderful meals at the January Innovo.

Thanks to all of our terrific committee chairs and extra volunteers that submitted Annual Reports as well as their volunteers who worked so vigilantly all year long.

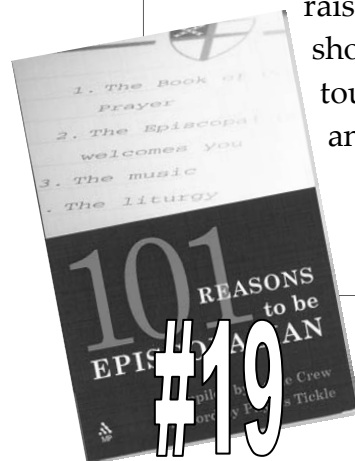
Is there someone in our parish who has gone above and beyond? If you would like to offer thanks, please call the office at 793-9575.

Good Samaritans:

Jan 25 - Feb 7	Ellen Redfield	799-4401
Feb 8 - Feb 21	Michael Keenan	799-8712
Feb 22 - Mar 7	Susan Daugherty	249-1989

We have full-bodied worship: bow, kneel, sit, stand, kneel, hug, walk, and sometimes even raise your hands, cry, laugh, sing, shout, whisper, smell, taste, feel touch, hold, see, and behold and on and on...

*The Very Rev. Marilyn J. Engstrom
Diocese of Wyoming*

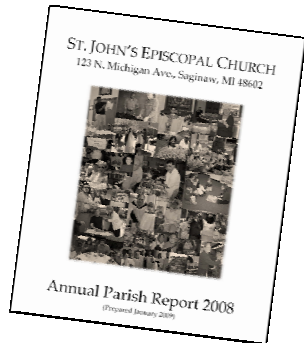


Cf. 101 Reasons to be Episcopalian, compiled by Louie Crew. © 2003 by Louie Crew/Morehouse ISDN 0-8192-1925-8 e Publishing.



Thank You for a Truly Exceptional Great Year in 2008!

“Continuing to Turn-Around and Reclaiming Mission” were the two main themes in our Rector’s Address to the Parish at this year’s Annual Meeting held this past Sunday, January 25th. Always a great time for all who attend, this year saw even more people come participate, enjoy fellowship and learn about what’s ahead for 2009. In addition to highlighting the *Annual Report* (extra copies of which are still available at church or on our website at www.stjohns-saginaw.org), this is the occasion in which we, as the members of St. John’s, elect representatives and members of the Vestry, say thank you to our retiring members of the Vestry, and hear from our Sr. Warden, Treasurer, and Rector. We do all of this in the context of a breakfast meeting and all in the span of just about an hour, in-between the Sunday services. This is a day that is truly filled with fun, fellowship and good food inasmuch as important information.



A major note of thanks is due to Sue Luxton and the very talented team, including: Janet Cosenza, Rachel D’Arpini, Sperry Garber, Al Gissendanner, Barbara Jones, Sharon Kaylor, Jack Luxton, Ellen Redfield, Ida Smith, Sallie Swanson, Joan Wendland, and Jan Young.

Thank you everyone for graciously sharing so much of your time and talents to help make the Annual Breakfast and Annual Meeting so special for us all!

Help Spruce-up Things in the Nursery...

Ms. Rachel, our nursery coordinator, is looking for new or gently used toys to update the selection found in the nursery. It would be great to have a few more toys she can use to rotate in and out of the nursery to freshen the selection of toys for our youngest members.

Some toys that would be appreciated are wooden puzzles and baby dolls. But she would accept any toys appropriate for children aged birth to three-years-old.

Thanks so much,
Elizabeth Stuber



ST. JOHN’S IS A CHURCH CALLED TO CARE, SHARE, WORSHIP, CELEBRATE AND LOVE.

In Recognition of Some of Our Faithful and Dedicated Leadership: Well Done!

By Darren Elin+

Kim Burau – With wonderful life experience, as well as the perspective of the Church in different places, Kim has graced our conversations and deliberations with her gifts, willingness to listen and readiness to work together. Kim has been an example of dedication to the ministry we share here at St. John's, and I am grateful not only for her leadership these past years on the Vestry, but also for her gracious hospitality which is such an essential part of who she is as a person. Thank you Kim!



Bill Vlassis – It almost goes without saying that if one is looking for somebody who is dedicated and devoted to St. John's, one need simply look to Bill Vlassis! For almost his entire life, St. John's has been Bill's home and extended family, and his service is only surpassed for his love of this church. Bill has served in just about every conceivable leadership position – probably twice, and it has been an honor to have him back on the Vestry these past three years. Retiring is more of a misnomer, as Bill continues to be a major part of our Buildings & Grounds Team and the Finance Team. Thank you, sir!

Paul Schaub – Now holds the distinct honor of having been the longest-serving member of the Vestry without ever being elected! Seriously enough, Paul has demonstrated his commitment and leadership, faithfully and often quietly being right there when we've needed him most and St. John's has definitely put his gifts and talents to good use! In his time on the Vestry, Paul also graciously agreed to serve as an officer: first as Treasurer and then as Warden. No matter what his role, one thing remains true: Paul continues to embody the spirit of servant leadership, certainly in no small way by who he is – always ready to help make a difference.



Karen Parr – 'Retiring' is really not accurate, since although Karen has completed her term as a Vestry Member, she has graciously offered to serve as Parish Representative to Convocation Council and Diocesan Convention. As such, Karen will continue to be a part of the Vestry in an ex-officio role. In addition to completing her current term as a member of the Vestry, Karen has been serving as a Parish Ministry Intern, which has afforded her opportunities to work with many of our parishioners with just about every aspect of parish life. Karen continues to enjoy her own participation with choir and in liturgy.

So to Kim, Karen, Paul, Bill and all those who have answered the call to share in leadership, Thank you! Your dedication, commitment and outstanding service truly make a difference in all that St. John's continues to offer in the name of our Lord. The ministry we share is made possible by the leadership and commitment that continues to grow. Shared leadership is more than a concept in a business management; it is a value we continue to grow into, as we seek to **live into our vision of becoming a vibrant urban new historic church.**

ST. JOHN'S IS A CHURCH CALLED TO CARE, SHARE, WORSHIP, CELEBRATE AND LOVE.

From the Director of Music:

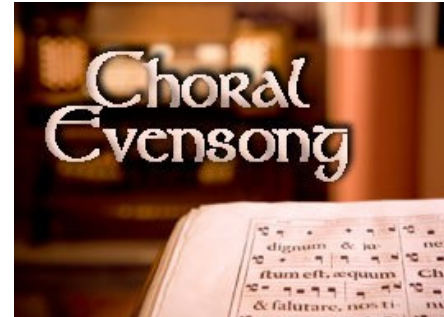
On the first Sunday of March, St. John's will again present one of the great gifts of Anglicanism to the larger community. Evensong has become a favorite at our church, not only because of the fine music sung by the choir, but also because it gives us an opportunity to gather together and show Saginaw what we do best.

Evensong is sung daily in the Anglican cathedrals of England, as well as many places in the United States. It is the office of Evening Prayer (the counterpart to Morning Prayer), but completely sung by the choir and clergy. It offers ample time for reflection and prayer by the congregation.

One of the joys of our Evensongs is the chance to welcome our guests and friends from St. John's church in Mt. Pleasant. Mary Lou Nowicki will again be the organist, and members of their choir will join us for the day. Following the service, we will have one of our famous receptions in the community room.

Make plans to join us on March 1st at 4:00 for this special occasion!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Kevin Simons



Stewardship Update

We entered January with a great start toward our Annual Giving Pledge Goal of \$200,000 for 2009 with commitments for just over \$150,000. Now we need to hear from **YOU!** If you have not yet had a chance to sign a pledge card for 2009, please know that your pledge greatly matters and we need to hear from you! Thanks to our shared commitment, we have made great progress in turning around our programs, ministry and finances. Let's not stop now, but continue this crucial effort!

In planning for 2009, we will be more than half-way towards eliminating our recurring deficit. View the charts to see what our 2009 Budget looks like in terms of percentages:

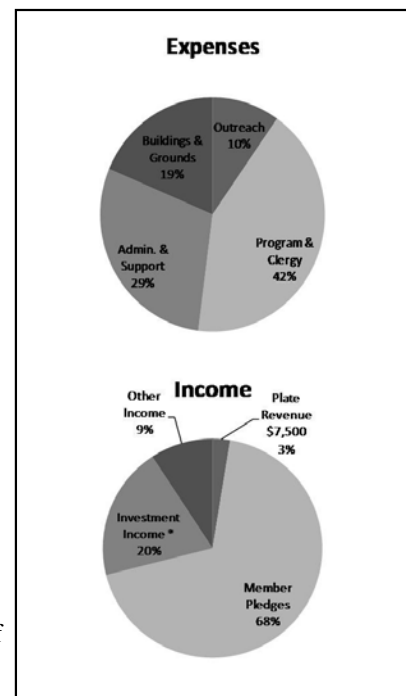
It has certainly been true, but now it is even clearer to see that every commitment is needed! Let's face it: we are doing more than paying bills at St. John's. **We are supporting God's ministry and you are a part of who we are!**

Closing the gap between income and expenses and realizing the priorities and goals of the parish will take **your** commitment!

So what can I as an individual parishioner do?

- Become more involved. Welcome the new faces at coffee hour. Offer to help with one or more of the ministries going on at St John's. Volunteer!
- Examine your own priorities. Does your weekly schedule include regular worship and Christian fellowship?
- Pledge! Does your pledge reflect how important St. John's and its work is to you?

Please prayerfully consider the sacrificial gift that you can give to the work of St. John's in this important year ahead. If you have questions, would like another Annual Giving Brochure & Pledge Card for 2009, or would like to "call in" your pledge, please contact Jan Young, our Parish Administrator by email at jan@stjohns-saginaw.org or call her at 793-9575. *Many thanks!!*



ST. JOHN'S IS A CHURCH CALLED TO CARE, SHARE, WORSHIP, CELEBRATE AND LOVE.

St. John's Stories - What a year this has been!

In my childhood church, annual meetings took place immediately after the worship service. Children not yet confirmed were dismissed to the fellowship hall with a few teenage keepers. There were many adults who looked longingly after us---they were looking at a long, dry 45 minutes until freedom. We'll have to let the Presbyterians know that food is always a great incentive to stay, and better yet, a meeting that is pleasant, informative, and relatively brief.

Taking advantage of anyone who got near enough to me that I could grab their coat sleeve, or hold them hostage with their piece of coffee cake, I asked a question that had been circulating in my brain for the past couple of weeks of preparation. What was the best moment, event, thought, etc. in regard to St. John's, in this past year.? So, this isn't exactly a scientific survey, but one that seemed a good mix of people.

I will not use names, merely because I didn't ask for specific permission. One person had no hesitation in naming Blue Jean Sunday as her favorite—it was different, new and attracted many different people. Another said the camaraderie in the Altar Guild was special and supportive and fun. The choir, in several different ways, was praised for playing some different music, and the occasional addition of other instruments, especially one particular trumpet piece. The evensong that was presented along with the choir of St John's Mt. Pleasant, was a favorite. Our more frequent pot lucks and shared meals continues to build senses of community. The lunch bag program, one of those things where you get back so much more than you give. For me, a particular young man on Christmas Eve night brought that home to me, an experience I'll probably share in another article. Many people found new energy and new closeness in the angled pews, and in the whole Turn Our Church Around vision.

I also got another awareness on Sunday. One person was just ready for a new year. Changes are not always planned or welcomed. The whole world, right along with the rest of us, had changes galore. Some minor, some entertaining, some long needed, and some that mean life will never, ever be the same. The idea is not different. Maybe what was different is remembering to care about those whose changes have been hard. As we go into this new year, let's keep looking for these pleasant, enchanting changes like blueberry bread, cottage meetings where we truly do get to know each other better, more fresh ideas like blue jean Sundays or really shake things up and have a formal wear Sunday. What a year! Can't wait for this one! Thanks for all who "volunteered" to give me answers to my endless questions.

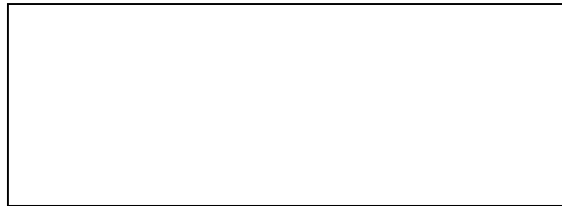
Submitted by Karen Parr



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Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is Tuesday, February 24th at 6:00pm. This fun Anglican tradition strives to get rid of all of the "fat in the larder" before Lent arrives on Ash Wednesday. Join us for a light evening of food, fellowship, and fun. A donation of \$5 per adult (children \$2.50) is requested.



Ash Wednesday Services

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. On this day, Christians focus on their complete sinfulness and the necessity of Christ's suffering and death to insure their salvation. The ashes we incorporate into the service are referred to many times in the Old Testament as signs of sorrow, mourning, humility, and repentance. Join us for one of two special services on **Ash**

Wednesday (noon and 6:00pm) to mark the beginning of this important season and remind ourselves exactly why Easter is such a joyous Celebration.

