



THE MESSENGER



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

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Alleluia! The Lord has risen! Christ is Alive!

This bold proclamation of Easter celebrates a movement away from simple belief to a faith that is a trust that can guide and direct our lives in something greater than we can fully comprehend. I believe that what we celebrate with Easter is the point of reckoning for us all as Christians – this is where the “rubber meets the road” for our own faith. When we come right to it, there is very little to explain about the resurrection itself. It is one of the prime aspects of our faith where we celebrate what is ultimately a divine mystery – the great mystery of God’s action that leads to God’s presence here and now.

Let’s face it, like the first witnesses to the resurrection, we are not as quick to trust what we cannot fully explain, let alone control. In uncertain, anxious and even dangerous times as those first days, it would have been easy to let fears and anxiety control their lives. But we need to admit that some 2,000 years later, we too are living in times in which the security of the past has been compromised; the directions and hope of the future seems unclear at best. How do we hold fast and trust what we do not fully know? How do we recognize and know the risen Christ? At the tomb, in Emmaus, at a seashore, in this room, Jesus comes to us. In all these accounts what is common is that the risen Jesus is experienced fully in community.

If you want to find Christ and really know the Messiah then live the resurrection life that we so boldly proclaim. A bishop I served in a former diocese reminded me that if you want to know the risen Christ, you really need to “throw yourself into the community of faith, the Body of Christ and be a committed member of the Church.” As we assert in our own Baptismal Covenant, it is to the Body of Christ where God is known. What we experience and share together is at the heart of the Gospel life and is why we affirm so often in our communications that you make a difference. Your participation and commitment is what makes a program successful, our stewardship faithful, and even our worship to be so powerful and moving.

We have been able to respond to what we discerned to be God’s yearning for our life and ministry in the coming years, beginning with taking the action necessary to be accessible for all people and to find news ways of being the Church in Saginaw now and in the years ahead. The bold proclamation of Easter asserts that resurrection follows death, and that in endings we find beginnings. As Christians we do what our faith compels us to do. In all that we are currently doing, we are demonstrating our faith commitment and trust to the Easter message and revealing what the resurrection is all about in our actions.

Now comes yet another opportunity to live out the message of Easter. Our sisters and brothers of Calvary Episcopal Church have discerned after much prayer, discussion and shared work that God is calling for their ministry to also change its direction. The time has come where their ministry is no longer supported, but burdened by their building. Is it the end of their community? Certainly not! The people of Calvary have accepted the invitation extended by us and through our Bishop to bring their ministry in the midst of what we share here at St. John’s. Calvary has been on an extraordinary journey of their own through their Mutual Ministry Support Team. Bringing our ministry together strengthens what each offers and allows new creativity and directions to flourish and our mission to expand. Immediately there are new opportunities to experience how God is making all things new! Through you and what we can contribute together is how the Messiah, the risen and living Christ is recognized and known, revealing the transforming power of Jesus through what we share as the transforming power of community.

Alleluia! The Lord is risen! Christ is alive and visible by what we can share and live together!

Samuel Clinton



Happy Birthday!

- 1 David Corcoran
- 2 Tom Donaghy
- 3 Carrie Barshaw
- 5 Susan Beckley
- 6 Chuck Stuart
- 7 Amanda Robison
- 11 Kathie Smith
- 13 Clarence (Bud) Blodgett
- 13 Eleanor McLaughlin
- 16 Leon Koeplinger
- 17 Natasha Coulouris
- 19 Stephanie Peters
- 21 Patricia Jackson
- 21 Nancy Wilson
- 22 Helen Needham
- 24 Michael Rump
- 28 Susan Beckley
- 28 Kaylee Cittel
- 29 Betty Grills
- 31 Barbara Roberts

Happy Anniversary

- 1 Marcia & Dan Hoffman
- 10 Clara & Bill Vlassis
- 11 Carrie & Todd Barshaw
- 12 Kerrie & Tom Blackney
- 13 Marcie & David Winters
- 17 Jan & Jerry Young
- 17 Kathi & Herb Spence
- 18 Sue & Jack Luxton
- 21 Lorraine & Ron Swarhout
- 23 Barb & Ray Ilkka

Thank You

Thank you to **Alice Heinz** for the donation of the cut glass serving platters for our kitchen.

Thank you **Sarah Elin, Tom Donaghy, Sue & Jack Luxton, Ida Smith, Jane & Al Vondrasek, Sharon Kaylor, Sue & Richard Marquardt, Ellen Redfield, Jan Young, Marcia Hoffman, Janet Cosenza, Nancy Birdsall, Melanie & Gary Hollman** for your help with our April Festive Sunday Parish Potluck!

Thank you **Amy Simons & Paul Schaub** for your help with our Eastertide Evensongs reception.

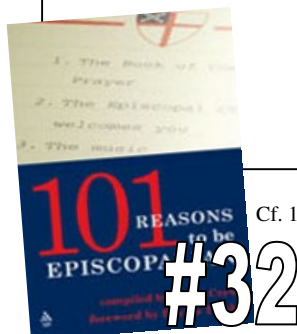
Is there someone in our parish who has gone above and beyond? If you would like to offer thanks, please call the office at 793-9575.

Good Samaritans:

May 2 - May 15	Diane Grigg	793 - 1669
May 16 - May 29	Linda Buzon	790 - 2164
May 30 - June 12	Sperry Garber	790 - 4940

The Episcopal Church taught me that Jesus came to challenge, not just comfort; to over-turn, not maintain; to love, not judge; to include, not cast aside.

*The Rev. Canon Elizaeth R. Gietz
Diocese of New Jersey*



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

Outreach Update

Pat yourselves on the back! St. John's (with help from our friends at Calvary) has once again been one of the leading contributors to the City Rescue Mission's **Operation Hope Tote!** Together, we donated 38 bags filled with personal care items that were distributed to our neighbors most in need of them. Way to go!

Our Lenten disciplines also included contributing to \$161.44 to the Episcopal Relief and Development fund. To learn more about **ERD** visit: www.er-d.org.



The Episcopal Church Welcomes You

Signs surrounding St. John's proclaim, "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You!" In a similar fashion, a portion of our mission statement invites us to "Care, Share..." As members of St. John's, it is our collective responsibility to live into and to reflect these statements.

During the coffee hour, on a recent Sunday, I was pleased with and proud of several St. John's parishioners. A young couple, strangers to our church and to Saginaw, were approached and involved by our rector and subsequently, individually involved by no fewer than seven coffee hour "regulars." I was one of the fortunate who had the opportunity to visit with them. Be assured, our guests were both pleased and receptive to the hospitality of our "Caring and Sharing." As they were leaving, they again expressed their pleasure with St. John's and it's members and assured us that they definitely would return.

Hospitality is not just the responsibility of our greeters! It has to become the shared effort of all. Through the conscious acts of welcoming, providing for hospitality and extending one's hand during "The Peace" we will effectively live into our vision. We will become a more active, a more vibrant, and a more responsive home of worship.

Keith H. Birdsall,
Senior Warden



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Presiding Bishop's Easter Message

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

—Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16

The Diocese of Haiti has observed Lent in a very different way this year. When Bishop Duracin and I spoke just before Ash Wednesday, we talked about how this year would be different. He noted that the people of Haiti would need to practice saying Alleluia, so that when Easter came they could enter in with joy. In the midst of grief and darkness, it can be exceedingly difficult to believe that resurrection is a possibility.

Nora Gallagher makes a similar point in her book, "Practicing Resurrection."

We are not born with the ability to insist on resurrection everywhere we turn. It takes the discipline and repetition that forms an athlete – in this case, a spiritually fit Christian. We practice our faith because we must – it withers and atrophies unless it's stretched. We must continue to give evidence of the faith that is within us.

Easter prods and provokes us with an immense stretching exercise. God has renewed a life given to the evil of this world on behalf of those with no other helper. That earth-shattering and tomb-shattering rebirth has planted the seeds of hope in each one of us. Yet those seeds do not produce fruit without struggle.

The people of Haiti are finding new life in the midst of death and struggle. As a nation and a people they have repeatedly practiced resurrection through centuries of slavery, oppression, invasion, corruption, and privation. The joy of their art forms – music and painting in particular – gives evidence of the hope that is within them as a people. They know, deep in their cultural DNA, that God is continually bringing new life out of death. Yet each person must discover and nurture that hope. It is made far easier in community.

The shared hope of a community is essential. Most human beings cannot long survive the evil and death of solitary confinement or a concentration camp. It is the shared sense of suffering and the shared nurture of even tiny embers of hope that offers life. The greatest cruelty of places like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib is the removal and destruction of such hope. The absence or disconnection from other people as sources of hope leads to suicide and even that mysterious ailment in young children called "failure to thrive."

The Christian community is about shared hope in resurrection. The citation at the head of this article first buoyed hope among a people exiled in a foreign land, without the support of familiar leaders or places of worship. That people developed a community that could practice its faith in a strange land, insisting that God was present among them even in exile. Jesus insists that that light is present even in the midst of Roman oppression, and that he will gather a community to remember that light and practice seeing and discovering it.

The Christian community is meant to be a mutual hope society, with each one offering courage to another whose hope has waned, insisting that even in the darkest of night, new life is being prepared. That work is constant – it will not end until the end of all things. And still the community persists, year in and year out, in time of earthquake and war and flood, in time of joy and new birth and discovery. Together we can shout, "Alleluia, he is risen! Indeed, he is risen, Alleluia!" even when some among us are not quite so confident as others. For indeed, the body of Christ is rising and risen when even a small part of it can rejoice and insist that God is renewing the face of the earth and light has dawned upon us.

Alleluia! Keep practicing that joyful shout. Someone needs to hear its truth. Alleluia!

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church



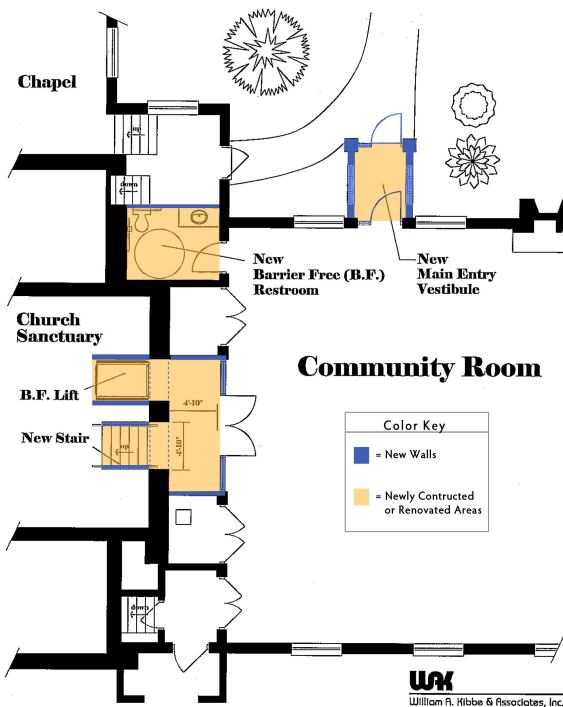
Making Our Future Accessible is all About Your Commitment!

Thank you! It is because of the commitment we share and the pledge you have offered that the key part of our vision is becoming a reality. We are so incredibly close to our goal of \$150,000 that truly, your commitment makes all the difference! It is incredible that so many people have come to celebrate what we are doing. Clearly, the Accessibility Project will serve the needs of our community for generations to come!

Last month we reported that we had received over 34 commitments for a total of over \$112,000 and now we are proud to say that we have closer to \$146,000! Because of this, our Vestry voted to proceed with the project with ground-breaking to begin in mid-August. Help be a part of this momentous day in the life and ministry of St. John's. Next month we expect to share with you not only the exact date of the ground-breaking, but also the good news that we have reached the goal or even surpassed it. Will you help make this possible? We know that you want to be a part of this great work and your own commitment will make the difference, so please prayerfully consider how you can help make a difference and pledge! You can even

contribute via our secure website at <http://www.stjohns-saginaw.org/accessibility.html> to either download a copy of our brochure, watch the video explaining our project or fulfill your pledge.

Remember this is our vision and together we can make our future accessible for all!



Hear What They Are Saying...
"This church, from its very beginning has been supportive of the generations to come. This transition is a calling from God to be loving and welcome to everyone."
~Mary Spence



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A Greener, Healthier You!

We all want to be more earth-friendly. We all want to be healthy. But many a broken New Year's Resolution has proven that sometimes we have better intentions than action. The truth is we won't act until it fits our lifestyles so how can St. John's help?

Spring is here and so is the bike rack! If you live within biking distance try biking to church! Just once a week is a great start to meeting your goals. To learn more about safely enjoying your bike visit the League of Michigan Bicyclist website at www.lmb.org for a free copy of "What Every Michigan Bicyclist Must Know."



Mother's Day is May 9th

Don't wait to the last second to plan how you'll take care of the one who takes care of you. Mother's Day is Sunday, May 9th. Why not share your sentiments with the rest of your church family with Altar Flowers in honor of her? Contact our parish office for details or visit www.stjohns-saginaw.org/downloads.html for a printable form.



Outreach and June = Habitat for Humanity

Have Fun and Help Make a Difference, As We Help Others to Make a Difference!

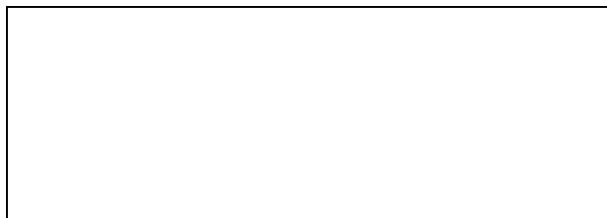
Each June for the past five years, we have helped to make a difference by taking part in Habitat for Humanity's Blitz Builds and Neighborhood Revitalization Projects. Although some of the circumstances have changed, this year is no exception. We invite you and your family to come have fun and make a difference as we help others to make a lasting difference for families in our greater community.

This year we'll be partnering with the Lake Huron Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America and our local Habitat chapter as they assist once again in house building and neighborhood revitalization. We have been asked to help provide support to this great effort by sponsoring a day of meals for the troupe of about 25 people, most likely on Friday, June 18th. Being part of the support team means that there are opportunities for everyone, no matter what your age to be involved and help make a difference. More information will be forthcoming, and you can contact Jerry Young at 989-790-9295 who will help coordinate this great project to sign-up and join this great team!



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Farewell Potluck - May 23rd

Join us for our last Festive Sunday Parish
Potluck of the year and a farewell party for
the Elin Family, **Sunday, May 23rd**
following the 10:30 service.

St. John's will be providing grilled bratwurst,
grilled chicken, and dessert. **Please bring
one of your families favorite picnic style
sides!**

