

The Clarion

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September 2008

THE CHURCH OF SAINT CLEMENT

Episcopal + Alexandria, VA

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Communications Update

By Lee Lavinder (Vestry Liaison for Communications)

It's always sad saying goodbye to the Summer months, but Fall is quickly proving to be a busy and fun season too! We have the Ministry Fair, pledge drive, blessing of the animals as well as the return of Sunday School and the Thrift Shop to look forward to. This issue of the Clarion is chocked full of new events and great ways to get more involved in the church so let's get started.

Every week we say a prayer for the Bishops, Priests and Deacons but do you ever wonder what exactly a Deacon is? The Rev. Deacon Cynthia Park answers that question plus adds a lot more insight into the role of being a Deacon. Read the second installment of the three part series in this issue of the Clarion.

The results are in! Thanks to everyone that filled out the parish news survey I sent around several months ago. From the returned surveys, I realized that many in the parish did not know that the St. Clement's web site (www.saintclement.org) is our primary means of receiving the Clarion. It's environmentally friendly plus it saves church funds by saving money on paper and distribution. If you don't have internet access, don't worry, we will still have hard copies available. Please let the church office know if you need an issue mailed to you.

If you haven't visited our web site (www.saintclement.org), now's a great time to check it out. It's not just a way to access the Clarion (current and back issues) it's also a great way too keep informed on everything from the Episcopal Church to Volunteer Opportunities. While your there why not "bookmark" and add St. Clements to your list of favorite internet sites.

Lastly, just a reminder that if you have ideas, stories or articles you would like to include in a future issue of the Clarion please let us know. It's easy just drop the article off in the church office prior to the 20th of the month.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

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| Sept 5 | Thrift shop reopens (Fridays and Saturdays 10 -1 PM) |
| Sept 7/14 | Sunday School Registration / Sunday School Begins and Blessing of the Backpacks |
| Sep 21 | Ministry Fair/Homecoming (watch the bulletin for updates) |
| Oct 5 | Blessing of the animals at Cameron Station |

"We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons; that they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments." BCP, 387

Bishops and Priests We Know, But What Exactly Is A Deacon, Part II?

by

The Rev. Deacon Cynthia Park

The Diaconate experienced its "Golden Age" from the close of the New Testament period through the first three centuries of the Church. Deacons were the primary instruments of ministry in the Church and in the world: They collected and distributed resources to those in need of them, served as the bishop's eyes and ears among the people, reported how the Gospel was being received and what the needs of the world were that the Church could address in terms of justice and compassion, and were an integral part in preparing converts for baptism into the Christian faith. As late as 325 CE, the Diaconate was conceived as a full and complete order of ministry, working in harmony with that of bishops and presbyters (priests).

Emperor Constantine's conversion of to the Christian faith in 313 initiated a new season in the life of the Church, and as a result, changes to the Church's concept of ministry. No longer an outlawed secret sect, Constantine brought Christianity out of the catacombs and into the public square. The Church enjoyed a strong influence over society, reshaping its sense of justice. At the same time, no longer galvanized by the rigors of persecution, the Church ceased its strident struggle against assimilation by the society it now so strongly influenced. In short, the Church began to look more like Roman society than Roman society looked like the Church.

The three orders were now organized as a progression of grades through which leaders passed on their way to the most prestigious Church office, the Episcopate (bishop); whereas in earlier times bishops, priests, and deacons had worked together as full and equal partners in ministry to establish and strengthen the Church. Through Constantine's rather aggressive evangelism, the Church grew so quickly that bishops assisted by deacons alone could no longer manage it effectively. More local pastoral oversight went to priests. Deacons shifted their emphasis from the wider diocesan area to supporting priests in their local ministrations, acting out an abbreviated form of their earlier roles by attending to the needs of the local parish and community.

As these local churches grew, other orders developed "below" the deacon: Doorkeeper, Exorcist, Lector, Subdeacon (acolyte), and persons training for ministry passed through each of these on their way to the "higher" order of priest or bishop. Eventually, these very stylized orders disappeared, leaving the Diaconate somewhat the worse for wear. Now the Church conceived the Diaconate as the bottom rung of a hierarchical ministry. The "full and complete order" of deacon with its distinctive ministry tasks had clearly ceased to exist.

By the time of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the Diaconate was described as "an inferior office" (BCP, 1928, p. 535) through which one hoped to advance. Deacons were still at work in the American Church, however, as witnessed by the life and ministry of persons such as David Pendleton Oakerhater, a Cheyenne convert (whose feast day in the Church is September 1) who served the Church faithfully as a minister, teacher, and evangelist for almost forty years before his death in 1931. Such cases were clearly not the norm for ministry, however.

America's social and economic upheaval in the early part of the 20th century disparately impacted those living on the margins of American society. For a brief time, deacons were in high demand again throughout the Church, not just in the Oklahoma frontier where Oakerhater had served. The Church needed ministers in urban centers who could be devoted full time to outreach in specific areas of need such as soup kitchens, shelters, and hospitals. The Church ordained only men as deacons, though it "set aside" women as "deaconesses", using them to serve primarily in nursing, but refusing to treat them as clergy, per se. The New England Deaconess Hospital in Boston is an enduring example of their distinctive ministry to the Church and society.

In the 1950s, responding to the post-WWII baby boom, deacons were again recruited in large numbers. This time, however, the Church needed them to go into a new frontier -- the suburbs -- to assist as "para-priests"-- quick fixes for churches that were forming faster than seminaries could produce priests to supply them. This particular iteration of the Diaconate ended in the early 1970s. But it left its mark in the minds of many Episcopalians who, to this day, imagine that deacons serve as "filler" priests, standing in where a priest cannot be present. And they imagine that the role of the deacon is to learn how to be a priest.

The Church until only recently adapted that same mentality. For the past thirty or so years, the transitional deacon -- a

person intentionally passing through the Diaconate on the way to priesthood -- has been the norm. Separate and apart from blurring the three distinct orders that ideally operate in harmony, the customary six-month stint an ordained serves as a deacon before becoming a priest has made it virtually impossible to establish for the Church today the biblical and theological importance of the deacon as the model for ministry outside of the Church among both non-believers and among the poor, the sick, the friendless, and the needy. Church growth, it was argued, had slowed to the point that seminaries were well able to supply a surfeit of priests. In fact, many dioceses routinely placed moratoriums on entertaining new aspirants to the priesthood, because they were running out of places to put them once they were ordained.

In short, there were so many priests available that surplus priests could attend work among the poor and otherwise marginalized in society without local parish churches suffering a personnel loss. After a while, few around could even remember what it was that deacons once did, what it was that made their ministry unique. With little notice and almost no argument, deacons simply ceased to be.

Next month, in our final installment, we will look at the explosive rebirth of the Diaconate in the Church worldwide and, in particular, in the Diocese of Virginia. We will explore just a few of the exciting ways in which deacons are contributing today that would have been unimaginable in times past, and how, as a result of their contributions, they are stirring an awakening in the Church that has not been felt for some time.

Sunday School and Blessing of the Backpacks

The Nursery will be open this Sunday; thank you Barbara Borden our well-qualified and experienced substitute. (Our regular care provider, Carolyn Stewart, will be away, but will return Sept 7. Sunday School registration begins Sept 7 with a Children's Chapel (during the Sunday School hour) for students in the fifth grade and younger. (Older kids are welcome to attend as helpers.) We'll gather in church with our families. Father John will dismiss the children shortly after the opening hymn. Children will return to their families at the exchange of the Peace for Holy Communion.

September 14 at 10 AM: We will kick-off the Sunday School year with a new tradition, The Blessing of the Backpacks. Have your children bring their backpack, bookbag, cubbybag, etc. to church. Children will place these on the altar...watch what happens!

And, Sunday the 14th we'll be back in full swing with three Sunday School groups for students ages 3 1/2 - high school. (Children under 4 may opt for Nursery.)

If you did not receive the mailing concerning this item and need one, please contact Chris Yeannakis at nathanyea@aol.com.

As always, if you would like to work with the Sunday School as a co-teacher, sponsor for the teen group, occasional helper or in some other capacity, please let Chris or Father John know.

Faithfully,

Christine Yeannakis
Director of Christian Education

Directed Giving Welcome

Ever see something at St. Clements that needs to be fixed or improved upon? While St. Clements is wonderful, sometimes you might notice a small thing that could really make a difference. In recent months there have been several instances of "directed giving". These people saw something at the church they felt could be improved and gave time or money to make it happen.

If you would like to contribute to the church for a specific improvement, please mention it to Father John or any vestry member. We would love to recognize those that have contributed in the Clarion or you can choose to remain anonymous.

ALIVE!

September is the month (as is April) that Saint Clement gathers non-perishable food for ALIVE! (Alexandrians Involved Ecumenically!) or, as Father John refers to it... "Alexandrians Living Ecumenically!". (Linda and I think that is perhaps a better acronym, but we are about to enter our 40th year with the original name, so...).

We'll have baskets in Marshall-Rutter Hall and in the Narthex. As before, canned fruit is especially needed, but any donation is gratefully accepted. Thank You!

Thrift Shop Reopens in September

The Thrift Shop will be opening Friday, September 5, 2008. Come down and check it out. There are all kinds of new (to you) merchandise. Also, please feel free to spread the word about the Thrift Shop and to drop off any items you've grown tired of.

October is Pledge Month

October is the pledge month for the Church of Saint Clement. It is important for pledges to be submitted by the end of October so that the Vestry may decide on a budget for 2009 based on the expected pledges. If the vestry does not know of a pledge, they cannot plan on it and may have to cut programs or services so that a balanced (or nearly) budget can be submitted to the parish.

A letter from the senior warden should be arriving at your home this month explaining the expected needs and how to pledge. If you have any questions, please contact Lee Lavinder or any member of the vestry.

Birthdays in September

9/3

Roberta Thomas

9/7

Ellie Rinkema

9/8

Ethan Medrick

9/11

Tom Hanlin

9/12

Efi Eyo Jr.

9/14

*Lewis Wearmouth
Kimberly Raynor-Smith*

9/18

*Gwen Kennedy
Meredith Wearing*

9/19

*Frances Doherty
Scott Franklin*

9/21

Ellen Shreve

9/27

Mike Crabill

9/29

*Julia Rodgers
Nancy Carver*

9/30

Reid Kidd

CLARION SUBMISSIONS: Submissions for the Clarion should be made to Lee Lavinder either by email (lavinder_lee@yahoo.com) or by dropping it off in the church office.