

The Clarion

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October 2008

THE CHURCH OF SAINT CLEMENT

Episcopal + Alexandria, VA

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Communications Update

By Lee Lavinder (Vestry Liaison for Communications)

Gone are the lazy hot days of summer. Fall is here and with it, lot's of great events and ways to become more active at Church. Everything from the blessing of the animals, Ful shots a Halloween pot luck and much, much more. October is the month to give. Remember to to send your pledges in, if you have not done so already. Also, consider a gift of your time; Outreach support is looking for someone to lead the school supply drive and the Christmas gift drive. Think of all of the children you could help.

Every week we say a prayer for the Bishops, Priests and Decons 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 final installment of the three part series in this issue of the Clarion.

If you haven't visited our web site (www.saintclement.org), now is 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.

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

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|--------|---|
| Oct 5 | Blessing of the animals at St. Clements (12:30) |
| Oct 26 | Flu Shots at the Church 9-10 am |
| Oct 30 | Halloween Family Pot Luck |

"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 III?

by

The Rev. Deacon Cynthia Park

The story goes that, one day two friends were walking through the woods along a riverbank downstream from a waterfall. While they were visiting, deep in conversation, the frantic cries of a person being carried downstream by the rapids called their attention. Immediately one of people on the bank dove into the torrent and courageously managed to drag the drowning person safely to shore. Not five minutes later, another person cried out for help, also caught in the rapids, and the rescuer dove in again, managing through exhaustion to get the person to the shore. While the four people sat together trying to catch their breaths *another* person appeared in the river! This time, the rescuer marched away from the river and toward the parked car. The companion called out, "You can't just walk away! What are you doing???" To which the person answered, "I'm going upstream to find out who keeps throwing these people in the water!"

This story is analogous to Deacons in the Church today. While, on the one hand, there is still an expectation that as servants of the Church they are the first responders to a crisis, there is, on the other hand, a new role of advocacy that is moving toward the top of the stream to find out "who keeps throwing these people in the water." As it should, the Church today presses itself to respond effectively to those who are marginalized in our culture by virtue of poverty, discrimination, or life circumstances. But, in its wisdom, the Church also recognizes that there are systemic problems in the world that create many of the conditions that push people to the margins. And as a witness to faith in God it is raising up persons to address these systemic problems in the name of the Church with all the authority that is vested in ordination. The Deacon's particular line of accountability is first to the bishop, what these issues are and to recommend effective strategies for resolving them, and secondly to the rector to assist in any duties necessary to promote the welfare of the local church. The two lines of accountability, however, do not triangulate, but compliment. In concert with the bishop and the parish rector, the Deacon goes into the world by the Church's blessing and with the Church's mandate.

As the Rev. Ormonde Plater, a longtime Deacon in the Diocese of Louisiana writes "The principal change [from the historic Diaconate to the present day Deacon] has been a shift from the deacon as a provider of service to the deacon as promoter of service." (*Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons*, 1991) Plater goes on to explain that it isn't that Deacons do not do actual ministry in the world's margins, but that most of their time and energy is spent in trying to lead others to influence public and Church policy in order to address problems at the head of the stream where the bodies are going into the river. The Deacon also serves as a leader to the Church modeling what it looks like to live as a Christian in the world confronting every day the evil that seeks to undermine the good in the world. In the ideal scenario of clergy and people, the Deacon receives the baton from the priest on Sunday and the people, now fed with spiritual food, follow the Deacon into the world to love and serve the Lord while the priest focuses on the sacraments and the pastoral concerns of the parish.

The reality, however, is that parishioners know most of what they know about their clergy by what they observe them doing on Sunday during the worship or education hour. In this light, the Deacon's role in the Sunday liturgy has important implications. Deacons call the people to prayer, because the Deacon is with the people during the week out in the world and knows those matters that require the prayers of the Church. In some parishes, Deacons lead a small group each Sunday morning before worship through local and national newspapers and the lives of parishioners to customize the prayers of the people so that they reflect timely issues for intercession and thanksgiving. In receiving the alms at the altar the Deacon stands as the representative of the Church's duty to provide for the necessities of the poor and to spread the Gospel, harkening to the early Church when the apostles selected the first seven to ensure that everyone was fed and cared for while they awaited the return of the Lord. In proclaiming the Gospel, the Deacon stands literally in the midst of the people retelling the words of Jesus and thereby exhorting them to remember that we are people of the Story, part of its continuing drama in the world that Jesus died to redeem.

Finally, in the dismissal, the Deacon steps away from the altar and to the doorway of the church inviting the family of God to join her or him out in the world. When Jesus died on the cross, he said, "it is finished". We look around and realize that when he said that there remained people who were poor, sick, unjustly treated, and facing difficult life circumstances. What Jesus "finished" was redemption, and what remains for the Church is action that is enthused with the Holy Spirit because of redemption. The Diaconate today is, according to the prayer book ordination service, "a

special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop.” For Deacons to be able to live into that servanthood, priests must be able to focus their attention on running parishes administratively and nurturing the body of Christ through the sacraments, and bishops must be effectively overseeing the entire operation and guarding its safety. The roles of the three orders have some helpful overlap, but they each call forth different skills and gifts for ministry. By God’s grace, the three work together in ways that are complimentary and support each other’s roles in the Church.

The restored order is new to Virginia. In fact, at the time of this writing, the only Deacons in the diocese are a few who, like me, are from other dioceses. Virginia is in the process, however, of forming its own community of Deacons from its parishes. Those Deacons will function as a community for fellowship and action in the diocese as well as in fellowship with their fellow clergy the priests and bishops, and they will serve a variety of roles as chaplains, teachers, healthcare workers, and countless other public roles. It may be that God is calling you to consider the Diaconate. No two Deacons are alike but there are some similarities of spirit, one might say. A heart for direct service ministry, zeal to fight against injustice, and leadership gifts to organize effective strategies to resolve problems are among some of the characteristics of modern Deacons. My own call is to teach scripture and to do it from a perspective that focuses on Christ’s invitation to us to feed the hungry, tend to the sick, visit the prisoners, and speak Truth to the world’s Lie. One of my fellow Deacons runs a “church” and “school” for people whose “home” is beneath an interstate overpass in Huntsville, Alabama. Whether by speaking to Congress or organizing food drives, today’s Deacons will be ministering in three primary areas: as agents of the bishop, carrying the Church’s message to the world and the world’s concerns back to the bishop; as heralds of the Word, exhorting the people to action; and as servants of the poor, seeking and serving Christ in every one of them.

I hope that these articles have been helpful in promoting understanding the nature of the Deacon for whom we pray each week. I would welcome the opportunity to visit more with any of you about ways that we can work together to be the Church in the world today.

BOOKS AND THE BIBLE

On Saturday mornings from 8:30 to about 10 a.m. you can find a small group of parishioners enjoying coffee and discussing books. This group reads books about the Bible, reads the books of the Bible, and reads other books on spirituality and the Christian life.

On April 17, the group will start reading Beyond Belief: the Secret Gospel of Thomas, by Elaine Pagels. This best selling account of an early non-canonical gospel discovered in the twentieth century is based on extensive scholarship. The Christian Science Monitor said: “Elaine Pagels has a gift for bringing ancient Christian texts alive, and for displaying their profound, sometimes startling import for contemporary experience.” This popular book is available in your public library.

All are welcome to come, learn, and enjoy! See the poster in Marshall-Rutter Hall and ask about Books and the Bible at Coffee Hour. Martha Crawley, Melanie Gray, Jackie Miller, Pat Stoeffel, Jan Taylor or Janet Ziegler can tell you about the group. Eight o’clockers, ask Ruth Jackson or Caroline Johnston.

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.

Volunteer Opportunity

Volunteer Opportunity-

Saint Clement's Community Partners for Children (CPC) is looking for a leader. The late summer CPC school supply drive and winter Christmas toy drive serves over 1,000 children in Alexandria. For the winter drive; unwrapped, new toys are collected at Saint Clement Marshall Rutter Hall from late November to early December each year. Alexandria Social Services works with CPC in selecting the families who will receive Christmas toys and the selected families come and 'shop' for the toys at TC Williams High School in mid-December.

Please contact Outreach Ministry, Annette Foster 703-587-4042, if you are interested in leading the CPC for Saint Clement Episcopal Church.

Thrift Shop Reopened in September

The Thrift Shop opened 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.

Birthdays in October

10/2

Iona Evans

10/3

Elsie Mosqueda

10/4

Brendan Conlon

10/5

Caroline Johnston

10/6

Marie Rush

10/11

Katherine Bolen

10/14

*Elizabeth Crane Brooke,
Madeleine Lucia Funk
Corey Prentice*

10/18

Yvonne Eyo

10/20

Stephen Nearing

10/23

Volney Taylor

10/25

*Jacqueline Miller
Leocadia Conlon*

10/28

Brandi DeBono.

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.