

The Mars Hill Proclaimer Mid Summer 2008

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REFLECTIONS for summer. This issue is dedicated to the recent confirmands and graduates. The Proclaimer acknowledges them, speaks to them, and offers them this gift and challenge in the form of a poem, written by Mary Oliver and courtesy of Speaking of Faith, from its archived section, "Approaching Prayer."

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean—

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

Cycles of the Faith

Father Mark reminded us in his funeral sermon for Dr. Gordon Graham that our life on earth is just one part of our journey in Christ. I don't often think of God's timing, but that week pointed to it for me. Just two days earlier, our church had reaffirmed our baptismal vows as we helped NAMES of GODPARENTS pledge to help little Gianna Gooden in her life in Christ as part of her baptism. During that service we also witnessed Bobby Russell, Jimmy Russell, Jennifer Sitzes and Carla Riego confirm their vows as Christians. Then, just two days later, we came together as Christians to witness to the life and death of our friend and fellow parishioner, Gordon Graham. The complete cycle: a life committed in the sacrament of baptism, young lives recommitted to their baptism in the sacrament of confirmation; Dr. Graham's life celebrated, his life's end on earth remembered and the grief of those who love him acknowledged, followed fittingly by the sacrament of the Eucharist, which forever commemorates the life and death of Jesus Christ, who holds out the promise to be with each of us this day in Paradise.

So many years ago when I was new to the Episcopal Church and St. Paul's, Fr. Briant told us in a funeral sermon that the primary purpose of Christian service for the dead in Christ is to remind us that even in death there is life; our faith is affirmed in a time of loss. Fr. Mark's funeral sermon for Dr. Graham did that: he both celebrated a life while acknowledging its loss, and reaffirmed the Christian's hope in the life with Christ after our time here. And how fitting for Dr. Graham and his family were the words at the end of the sermon of St. Paul, Well done, good and faithful servant. – Marilyn Cleland

REPORTS FROM THE CHURCH

The Vestry

I would like to use this space to thank everyone who takes on the small projects around our church. The painting of the furnace register covers, the changing of lights bulbs, and the spreading of mulch before the Bishop's visit are three that I noticed that were done anonymously. Thank you all: this is part of what makes our parish strong.

As a Vestry, we are working to improve the transparency and management of our finances. There are several projects that we are working on: a complete audit of 2007, the lighting of the sanctuary, and a committee to make our building more user friendly for visitors not familiar with it. We are also trying to find a sense of ourselves as a parish and what our mission to our community should be. We have a great parish family, and the Vestry is eager to receive your input. Please feel free to approach any Vestry member in person (they are listed in the bulletin each week) or place your written thoughts in the suggestion box. Thank you. --Rhys Prall, Senior Warden.

The Vestry Survey

Richard's review (see below) reminds us that we do have things to think about in terms of our church's mission. What do you suppose Paul would have to say to us, sort of a current Paul's Letter to the Church in DeKalb? He might ask us to think hard about ourselves and to respond to the questionnaire prayerfully. If there is to be a future for St. Paul's, it must begin now. Please complete the survey and send it in or bring it to church with you.

Newcomers

It is relevant to this report to note and to introduce a new family to the St. Paul's, Brad and Rochelle Cripe and their child, five-month old Andrew. Rochelle is from Nebraska (and, indeed, she has been welcomed by David Anderson!) and Brad is from New Mexico. Both come to us from Nebraska, where Brad earned his Ph.D.; they have made their way to DeKalb and NIU, where Brad is a professor of accounting (and, indeed, he has been welcomed by Bill Cummings). Rochelle is a graphics designer, now looking to find the right place to use her talents.

Both Brad and Rochelle have exclaimed their welcome from everyone at St. Paul's, this despite the fact that the Cripes have not seen children in the church (except during the confirmation?). In other words, the absence of young children has not deterred them; what encouraged them has been the welcome, the interest people have taken in them and their lives, the conversations about faith that have occurred already. I hope I have not overstated it when I say that they seemed to welcome this conversation.

They were willing to discuss their own faith journeys when I asked them: Rochelle was raised in a Protestant church, Brad raised in an Episcopal church in New Mexico. When looking for a church in DeKalb, they sought the Episcopal Church in part because Brad remains comfortable with it and also because Rochelle was seeking an alternative to some of the church practices she was familiar with.

Their story seems to parallel many who have come to the Episcopal Church: some have returned but many are called to it new, as converts. The Episcopal Church, historically called the middle way, satisfies many raised in Catholicism and many in Protestantism: it offers the

sacred liturgy and Eucharist that many former Protestants seek while retaining the emphasis upon preaching and hymn singing that are dear to their hearts; Roman Catholics appreciate the greater emphasis upon the Word and the beauty of the Anglican hymnal, while finding the liturgy (as developed in the Book of Common Prayer) and the Eucharist (taken at the altar in both bread and wine) nurturing the sense of the sacred of Catholicism.

As I say, I don't wish to overstate the Cripe's response to our church. The paragraph above perhaps speaks more to my own reasons than theirs for joining St. Paul's. I came here as a Protestant who had left Christianity but who nonetheless longed for the Church. The Cripe's main reason is that they have felt genuinely welcomed, as had I. The welcome is perhaps the most important reason for their continuing to be with us these several Sundays. To them, we say, we are glad you're here. We want our church to serve your needs for faith and fellowship.

--Marilyn Cleland

Confirmations

As mentioned in the section under reflections, several members of our church family were confirmed during Bishop Lee's visit on June 1st: Bobby & Jimmy Russell, Jennifer Sitzes, and Carla Riego.

Graduations

We have several members who have graduated: Michael Ouellette and Suzanne Geisler from middle school; Jennifer Sitzes from high school; and Cami Ouellette from college. Congratulations to all. These are important landmarks in life's journey.

} To the Youth of Our Church: We need you. {

We hope to see all of you in church as often as you can be there. You are important to us – and to our faith. You see, sometimes we older ones in the church may have lost some energy and vitality, and we need more challenge and more resistance in order to keep vigorous in our own faith. Your youth and indeed your energy add so much to our lives in the church; we feel more alive and responsive to God's message when you are around. Perhaps you do not know this, but I think most of the older members of the church would agree. So, when you come to St. Paul's, you are offering a ministry to the olders (pardon the word).

Perhaps you could use us (?).

Perhaps we in turn can offer you our ministry: we want to tell you that we care about you, that you are in our prayers, and that we will do our very best to serve you as you go through the new challenges life brings to you (including the challenge to faith and worship). Please do know that you can call upon us when you need us. We may not have answers, but we do have experiences, perhaps experiences similar to those you are embarking upon. We have experienced challenges to our faith, to our identities, to our search for meaning, to our moral sense. We have not always made good choices. We do know that you always have your parents to turn to. But we also know that sometimes one needs others. We hope that you know that you are cherished by our church family; we are committed to each other -- and that includes to you --in Christ. Think about it, ok?

We'd like to be there to see you blossom in your (one) "wild and precious life."

E.C.W. (Rosemarie Ostberg)

BOOK NOTES

We inaugurate this section with a book review or, really, book reviews by our own Richard Downen, whose interest in Christianity is both faithful and intellectual. He offers a review, below, of What the Gospels Meant, the newest book by writer and scholar of Christianity, Gary Wills. We hope not only that Richard continues to find material interesting enough to

share his thoughts with us, but also that others among us will be inspired to communicate some of their responses to resources about faith.

In the last three years Gary Wills has published three books which should be of interest to any Christian. Mr. Wills is retired Professor of Greek, a devout Catholic, and a prolific author with many, many books and articles to his credit including the Pulitzer Prize -winning *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. The three books that I am talking about are, in order of publication: What Jesus Meant, What Paul Meant, and What the Gospels Meant.

One way to look at each of these books is that they are the reflections of a devout Christian upon his faith. In this brief article I will attempt to summarize the essence of each of these books in my hope that you will be motivated to pick them up and read them yourselves. It is truly a worthwhile spiritual and intellectual exercise.

In What Jesus Meant Wills finds that Jesus did not bring a political message and that to understand his life and words as endorsing either right or left politics is to miss the point. His message was far more radical that even the most devout socialist or biblical fundamentalist could imagine. Any faith based politics is simply idolatry. It is the goal of the politics to do justice to all, it is the goal of Jesus that all be loved. In this paragraph I have summarized a carefully developed argument of 142 pages, each of which is worth reading.

In What Paul Meant we discover why Paul is important and why some leaders and thinkers, including Peter, condemned Paul. Paul is important because, though he never met Jesus the living man, he is the first to have written concerning Jesus' teachings. Yet Paul is difficult to know because only seven of the thirteen letters in the New Testament are authentically Paul. Those letter are Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, and Romans. In turn these letters are hard to understand because each of them was written to group of Christians in distress trying to solve a particular problem at a particular time and written by a man who was both busy and stressed. Wills finds Paul's most important meaning to be his reaffirmation of the message of love first conveyed by Jesus.

In What the Gospels Meant Wills asks why it took so long to write the Gospels and more importantly what makes each of the four distinctively important. The answer to the first question is relatively simple. It took so long to write them because all of the events described were known to local people. They could refer to their memories. They knew, for instance, who Simon of Cyrene was and who his children were. They did not need written reminders. There are four because each of the four represents a different important aspect of Jesus' life. Mark tells of the importance of Jesus to his followers. Matthew collects the sayings in an orderly and instructive manner, Luke stresses the healing aspects of Jesus' mission on Earth, and John stresses the divinity of Jesus.

These paragraphs do not do justice to these works. I hope that you may be motivated to read these books they are worth the effort. -- Richard Downen.

I wish to stress that Book Notes includes any media that we can in one sense read (take in as text – something to be interpreted – oh my gosh, that is a very generous definition). Thus, this section serves as a response to almost anything that prompts our interest, our curiosity, our passion, our displeasure – relevant to our faith. In the last Mars Hill, I listed some possible sources. I forgot to include an important one, Speaking of Faith, a wonderful NPR program with Krista Tippett as moderator, local at 89.5 FM. The site is rich and abundant and could provide the focus for many wonderful discussions. This wonderful program explores faith from many different angles and perspectives. Its goal is not to convert or to

evangelize but to speak to those interested in faith as a personal, intellectual, and/or public and political phenomenon. The program may be reached 89.5 FM on Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. However, you can find the program online if you Google Speaking of Faith: Google will take you to the program's official website, including its archive and all of the programs available for listening to and viewing with its free software, SOF. I know everyone does not use a computer, but if you do, please look at this wonderful resource for thoughtful people of faith and people interested in faith.

Call for Submissions. Please consider submitting your letters, information, reviews, and responses to the Mars Hill Proclaimer. We're going to have a substantial Fall 2008 issue to start the new church and academic year. Please consider writing for this issue, letting me know what you think so far in the form of a letter and/or offering something for the other sections.

In order to submit, all you have to do is to write and place what you have written in the Mars Hill Proclaimer mailbox in the mailbox section near Fr. Mark's office. Or you can submit to me at ritamackall@comcast.net or proclaimer@tbc.net if you want. Or you can call me to talk about ideas at 815-758-0566, especially Mondays and Tuesdays. I'm really interested to know what you think and what you want. Enjoy the rest of the summer.

PARISH NEWS BYTES

Hope Haven Dinners

Maureen Gerrity wishes to thank all those who have contributed to the dinners our parish has provided to Hope Haven this year. We prepare and serve the evening meal on all fifth Fridays. The next such Friday will be August 31, A sign-up sheet will be in the parish hall at the beginning of August.

E.C.W.'s(Episcopal Church Women) monthly ladies' luncheon will be on Saturday, July 19 at 12:30 p.m. Please see the sign-up sheet in the parish hall.

St. Paul's Monthly Men's Breakfast will be on Saturday, July 19, at 8 a.m. at Lincoln Inn in DeKalb.

Church Picnic: Sunday July 13 10 a.m.

We will meet at the large shelter in the park in Sycamore for an informal celebration of the Holy Eucharist, followed by food and fun! Meat, buns, soda and ice will be provided. Bring a side dish or dessert to share, your own tableware and a lawn chair. Please see the sign-up sheet in the parish hall.

Rockford Deanery Baseball Outing

On August 1 everyone is invited to join a cookout and baseball outing organized by St. Chad's in Loves Park. The sign up sheet and all details are on the table in the parish hall.

Fifth Sundays

The Vestry has proposed that in months with five Sundays, the fifth Sunday shall have a single service, which will alternate between Rite I and Rite II. The next such month will be August, and the date is August 31. More information to come.

Episcopal Relief and Development (ER-D) is providing aid to those affected by the flooding in the Midwest this summer. The Rector's Discretionary Fund will be making a contribution. If you would like to help, please see Fr. Mark.

Fr. Mark & family will be on vacation June 30 - July 7 and July 28 - August 4. During his absences, The Reverend Canon Robert Krogman will preside at Sunday and midweek services, and will be on call for pastoral emergencies.

E.C.W. Road Trip

The Episcopal Church Women have purchased 30 tickets to the musical “that has kept theatergoers in hysterics for over three years in Minneapolis, “CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES.” Our tickets are for the 2 p.m. performance on Saturday, September 13. The show is in Skokie, and we are working on bus arrangements. Please see the display and sign-up sheet on the table in the parish hall for more details.

Transitions

July & August

Birthdays

Hazel Retherford, July 3
Pat McMahon, July 4
Jocelyn Prall, July 5
Madge Gile, July 8
Emily Lloyd, July 13
Bob Prouty, July 13
Donald McAlister, July 15
Joan Graham, July 19
Marilyn Cleland, July 21
Carmi Ouellette, July 24
Charlie Nygaard, July 28
Andrew Gates, August 2
Amanda Lloyd, August 10
Cynthia Dorband, August 16
Emily Brieant, August 27
Brad Cripe, August 27
Sue Ouellette, August 31

Marriage Anniversaries

Rhys & Jocelyn Prall
July 27, 1977

Jim & Janie Torma
August 16, 1958

Dick & Sharon Downen
August 22, 1970

Roy & Nan Mason
August 25, 1963

The Faithful Departed

Gordon Graham
Joe Pecenka
John Roberts

The victims of the Myanmar cyclone, the earthquakes in China,
and the flooding in the midwestern United States