

ST. THOMAS' QUEST - MARCH 2010

Thoughts from Fr. Bob

First in a series on the four parish goals.

Now that we are experimenting with a monthly newsletter, I thought it be useful to add a column from me, as often there are topics that arise that don't fit in well with the regular cycle of Scripture readings and seasons of the year. You will also find a column from the Wardens and some other new reports as well in this issue.



Our first parish goal is to “inspire and energize our church community for growth.” We recite it and all the parish goals at every Executive Committee meeting and it's listed prominently in our weekly bulletins. It seems to me that “growth” means at least two things: both interior growth, that is, spiritual growth in the mind of Christ, as well as growth in numbers and vibrancy within the parish. And it's that second definition I've had in mind recently.

At its heart, the Christian Church is the only organization that exists for the *next* person through our doors. We who already have the Good News are called to share it with those who do not already know it. St. Francis pithily once said, “Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” And so how we think about *how* we welcome those who do not know the Good News, or us, is really important, if we want to take our first parish goal seriously. Some parishioners have asked me why I call the room one comes into before one enters the church itself a “lobby,” instead of the more traditional “narthex.” So what is a narthex? We use it, as do many churches, as a sort of introductory space. The ushers and bulletins and announcements are usually there, and sometimes the community hour is served there as well. You've heard me often call it “the lobby” and that's what is currently in our print and online publications as well.

Does the guest among us know what a “narthex” is? Perhaps. But probably not, not in this day and age. And so I've been using “lobby” for two reasons: first, to directly help put at ease, in a small way, those who might be visiting or checking us out, but more importantly, to inspire us to think hard about how we energize our community for growth.

It's actually not about the word itself. I like the word “narthex” just fine. There is a proper place for learning about an organization and its terms. But there is another simple truth thing we need to remind ourselves of, if we are serious about growth. And that's this: there can be no growth without change.

Every time a person visits, each time a guest worships with us, we change as a result, even if it's only a little bit. The story of the visit to Abraham by the three heavenly visitors (Genesis 18) is perhaps the best case in point. Three guests come passing by, and Abraham and Sarah rush to welcome them with what is essentially a lavish feast, bringing out the absolute best they had at the moment to do so. And as a result of their hospitality, they were changed by the visit: Abraham directly received a gift from the visitors, the gift of the promise of a child, who would be Isaac and the direct ancestor of Jesus. The visitors came not only to receive, but also to give. Abraham and Sarah changed, and actually, if you read the story closely, so did the three visitors, the guests of Abraham and Sarah.

And so will we. Because guests among us will stay and linger and return if they sense, in our actions even more than our words, that we see, as St. Benedict ordered put on the inside door of each monastery, “each guest as Christ himself.”

My goal in encouraging us to use the word “lobby” has been to help get each of us and all of us to think about what and how we welcome the guests among us. Ultimately, of course, we are all guests of the Lord of the Table. But we are also hosts of that Table for the next person who walks through the door. Are we willing to think of those new to St. Thomas as “guests,” rather than “visitors” or “newcomers” or merely bodies to fill up our church and balance our budget? Are we really willing to think of ourselves as hosts like Sarah and Abraham, rushing to bring out our best in all ways for the guests among us? Most importantly, are we willing to recognize that if we are serious about growing in numbers, that we must be open to change, not merely superficial change like the names of rooms, but the possibility of deep change that can come from welcoming each guest as Christ himself?

I'm not at all committed to the term “lobby” over “narthex.” But I am committed to the goals this parish has established, as I hope all of us are. If each of us are thinking and praying and acting on the goal of inspiring and energizing ourselves for growth, then that's the key thing, it seems to me.

Growth in the Spirit can be both interior or exterior. Actually, for either to be successful, all must take part. How can each of us be Abraham or Sarah for the next person we don't know who walks in looking for some Good News?

Lenten blessings continue!

Fr. Bob

Wardens' Notes:

Our newly elected Executive Committee spent Saturday, February 20 together at St. Mary's in Sparta. The day began with breaking bread together at breakfast which brought us to Morning Prayer led by Fr. Bob. We then entered into a wonderful, "getting to know you" time of sharing personal experiences laden with laughter and touching moments. Lunch was shared after our thanksgiving prayer. Following Noon-day Prayer our intensive Business Meeting began. A great many items were discussed, explained, questioned and decided upon. Exciting discussions abound. Our retreat culminated with sharing a Eucharist before departing for home.

Each member of the Executive Committee has reviewed the particular responsibilities of membership, has acknowledged and accepted them. Executive Committee members, additionally, have volunteered to assist in the following ministries:

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Primary Leadership</u>
Chairperson	Fr. Bob
Education	Fr. Bob, Nancy Hansen (2010)
Fundraising	Linda Lazicki (2012)
Hospitality, Social Events	Karen Scott (2011), Paulette Beer (2012) Linda Lazicki (2012)
Inreach	Debbie Belli (2012)
Outreach	Paulette Beer (2011) Emilie Dupont (2010)
Property	Dan Kadish (2011), John Mohr (2010), Bob Winter (2010)
Stewardship	Nancy Hansen (2010)
Worship, Pastoral Care	Fr. Bob
At-Large	Tom Brath (2010) Joe Sommese (2010) Kathy Moore (2012)

"Canons, laws, and bylaws may assign the rector, wardens, and vestry members (executive committee members) specific roles to play or jobs to do, but none of these individuals can perform those duties adequately without the help, support and understanding of the others". This is an excerpt taken from *The Vestry Handbook* by Christopher L. Webber.

Your Wardens, Dan Kadish and I have also reviewed the responsibilities of of Wardens, acknowledge and accept them. Please contact us regarding any issues you wish to share at: dkadish@warwick.net or nancyohansen@gmail.com. Thank You!

Have a Suggestion, Question or Comment?

The EC welcomes feedback (questions, suggestions, comments, concerns) on all aspects of our congregational life. Parishioners are invited to communicate with the EC publicly at scheduled meetings, or privately as individuals, with regard to issues of importance to them. In order to provide an additional

mechanism for communication, the EC has placed a decorated box in the lobby. This container is intended to serve as a receptacle for parishioner's statements about their hopes and dreams for St. Thomas and for our ministries. Please feel comfortable in reaching out to the EC in which ever manner is best for you.

"Fun" Raisers: Anyone attending the Live Auction on Friday evening February 12th will tell you, "WE HAD A WONDERFUL TIME". Attendees had a tremendous amount of baked goods to choose from, a multitude of different wines to taste, crackers & cheeses, coffee & teas. But it was the 100 items all carefully displayed in beautiful baskets that highlighted the evening. Thanks go out to the two wonderful auctioneers, Father Bob and Drew Hansen who livened up the bidding process to make it exciting. Runners were Linda & Stan Lazicki, Doreen Edwards and Adam Hansen who showcased each basket as it was bid on. Thanks to those who helped in the kitchen, sold and bought tickets, made goodies, went from business to business asking for donations and the set up and cleanup crew. Nancy Hansen was the chairman of the event. Rounding out the committee was Linda Lazicki, Gale MacPeek and Jill Dickerson. They made the baskets look exceptionally well and inviting. **The total profit from this winter event was \$ 3,642.00**, of which \$180 each will go to Harvest House locally and Episcopal Relief and Development for Haiti relief. Thank You everyone!! – Linda Lazicki.

Sunday School Notes: What a delightful way to spend a Sunday morning! St. Thomas' Sunday School class is (12) twelve strong in the 1st to 4th grades and (10) strong in the preschool and kindergarten group. We continue to use our Bibles for scripture look-up and reinforcement.

So, the question is which came first, dinosaurs or Jesus? More importantly, what is the answer? This question really stirs the class into some powerful discussions, always, of course leading back to Our Father. Another thought provoking statement is, "He must have been a wizard!" This statement was brought up during our class discussion of Jesus' time spent in the desert, tempted by Satan; so many wonderful ideas and things to ponder. These thoughts lead the class into critical thinking and problem solving. So gratifying!

Our youngest members are excitedly playing games, hearing our scripture stories and creating art to reinforce the story.

Thank you to our friends who contribute art projects for the children and to our "almost grown-up" helpers. Thank you to Susan Moffitt and Gale MacPeek for their dedication to Sunday School – Nancy Hansen

Worship Coordination Committee

All parishioners interested in helping to discuss and plan our worship services are invited to the next meeting of the Worship Coordination Committee, to be held on **Thursday, March 11 at 6:00 PM** in the office upstairs. The meeting will be attended by the Directors of Music and the Altar Guild, as well as representatives from various other worship guilds. For questions, please contact Fr. Bob.

Easter Flowers: Donations for Easter flowers in memorial or thanksgiving should be placed in the offering plate **prior to March 21**. Envelopes for these dedications can be found in your Offering Boxes or on the table in the lobby/narthex.

Come Eat Pancakes on Mothering Sunday! Mothering Sunday is March 14, and we will offer a Pancake Breakfast in between services for all, as a way to relax our Lenten disciplines a little. Please plan to attend and meet parishioners from the “other” service!

Parish Work Days

There is always a lot to do around a parish like ours that is blessed with a large complex and beautiful grounds, inside and out. The Executive Committee would like to invite all members to participate in Parish Work Days, every second Saturday from nine until noon, with lunch afterward. Rain or shine, please come and help keep up our beautiful parish buildings and grounds. Men and women, children and retirees – all are welcome and needed: An Action List is posted in the Narthex for **Saturday: February 13. Are you aware of a project or "job" needed to be done around St Thomas? Please speak with Dan Kadish, John Mohr, or Bob Winter.**

Executive Committee Meetings for 2010: In an effort to open the doors to each meeting to St. Thomas’ entire congregation, all members are invited to attend regular open meetings of the Executive Committee. **The regular schedule for EC meetings for 2010 is the second Sunday of the month at noon in the Office/Loft.** Please join us – the next meeting is March 14.

Financial Report

Parish Finances as of February 28, 2010

	February	Since Jan.
Offerings Received	\$4,856	\$12,178
Offerings Promised	<u>\$5,788</u>	<u>\$11,577</u>
Difference	\$-932	\$601
Total Income	\$9,920	\$20,882
Total Expenses	<u>\$13,500</u>	<u>\$25,525</u>
Difference	\$-1550	-\$4,643
Unrestricted Cash on hand:	\$31,702	

Thank you for Another Successful I.H.N. Host Week

During eight of the busy “Twelve Days of Christmas” St. Thomas’ parishioners hosted 5 guests without homes of their own. We offered meals, shelter, and companionship to a family of three (Mom, Dad, and a two year old boy) and two single women through the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The week of December 27th to January 3 was a difficult time to be a host church, (next year, we will host another winter week), but we managed to fill all 28 time slots. Thankfully, we were assisted by Bobbie DeGraaf and the Vernon United Methodist Church, the

Christ Community Church in Highland Lakes, Holy Counselor Lutheran Church, and Glenwood Baptist Church. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all of the St. Thomas’ parishioners who helped with set up, clean up, meals and overnight stays:

- The Schmick Family
- Mike Weidbrauk and Family, including Nancy and Mindy Weidbrauk
- The MacPeck Family (Harold and Gale)
- The Vince Family
- Debbie and Nicole Belli
- Ron Sr., and Phyllis Dupont
- Kerri Yezuita
- Father Bob Solon
- Terry Taylor
- Paulette Beer and Karen Scott
- Glenn Key
- Irene Engel
- Ginny Mohr
- Ron Jr., Sam, and Ben Dupont

Please forgive me if I have mistakenly forgotten to mention anyone.

Also, we are hosting families again at the end of April, and need donations of one or two **twin-size mattress pads** for small children who may have an accident. (The IHN mattresses are inflatable rubber and plastic and flocked, so they stain and puncture easily, but do not absorb moisture.) The two fold-up steel cots that our overnight volunteers sleep on are also in very bad shape, so if anyone has a **cot-sized foam mattress** they would be willing to donate, it would be greatly appreciated by our volunteers. (Such mattresses cost about \$50-\$75 at mattress stores.)

Thank you again for your willingness to love, feed, and shelter our neighbors in Jesus’ name. --Emilie Dupont

Ecumenical Lenten Series 2010:

Sponsored by The Vernon Clergy Association - **Wednesdays at 8 PM** (except where noted)

	Location	Preaching
Mar 10	St Francis de Sales	The Rev Roger Spence
Mar 17	MacAfee Bible Church	The Rev Bob Solon
Mar 24	Vernon UMC (at 7:30 PM)	The Rev Nik Fontana
Mar 31	Holy Counselor Lutheran	The Rev Abuchi Nwosu
Friday, Apr 2	Good Friday 12 noon St Thomas' Chapel	The Rev Edjir Jean

ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God - Romans 15:7

The Rev. Robert F. Solon, Jr., Vicar
 Mrs. Nancy Hansen, Sr. Warden Mr. Dan Kadish, Jr. Warden
 Mrs. Kathy Moore, Treasurer Mrs. Paulette Beer, Clerk

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 973-764-7506 (O) 973-974-7509 (F)
<http://www.st-thomas-vernon.org/> (web)
stthomas@warwick.net (email)

OUR VISION

We are a growing church family that reaches into and beyond the community. We have a relaxed and supportive environment, steeped in Christian tradition. We value new opportunities to enrich the minds and souls of all who come here.

GOALS

1. Inspire and energize our church community for growth.
2. Continue to develop our inreach and outreach ministries.
3. Enhance our existing Christian education programs.
4. Achieve parish status.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The year next to each name indicates the last full year of elected ministry.

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Chairperson	Fr. Bob
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DIOCESAN CONVENTION DELEGATES

Ginny Mohr (2011), Kathy Moore (2012), Francine Vince (2013)

STAFF AND APPOINTMENTS

Music Director	David Christensen
Sexton	Ginny Mohr
Parish Accountant	Diane Bryan
Sunday School	Nancy Hansen

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT ST. THOMAS'

Sunday, March 28: The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

8 AM Holy Eucharist (said)
 10 AM Holy Eucharist (sung)
 6 PM Quiet and Evening Prayer

Monday March 29: Monday in Holy Week

7 PM Holy Eucharist

Tuesday March 30: Tuesday in Holy Week

7 PM Holy Eucharist

Wednesday March 31: Wednesday in Holy Week

7 PM Holy Eucharist
 8 PM Ecumenical Service at Holy Counselor L.C.

THE TRIDUUM: THE THREE DAYS

Thursday, April 1: Maundy Thursday

7 PM Proper Maundy Thursday Liturgy with Footwashing and Holy Communion
 Vigil at the Reserved Sacrament

Friday, April 2, Good Friday

Vigil at the Reserved Sacrament Continues
 Noon: Ecumenical Good Friday Service – The Chapel
 7 PM Proper Good Friday Liturgy – The Church

Saturday, April 3, Holy Saturday

10 AM Proper Liturgy – the Lobby/Narthex

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Saturday, April 3

7:30 PM The Great Vigil of Easter

Sunday, April 4

6:30 AM Easter Ecumenical Service – the Cemetery
 7:15 AM Breakfast at Vernon UMC
 8 AM Holy Eucharist (said)
 10 AM Holy Eucharist (sung)
 6 PM Great Paschal Vespers

Please check our online calendar for all schedule updates at [http://stthomasvernon.mhsoftware.com/!](http://stthomasvernon.mhsoftware.com/)