

ST. THOMAS' QUEST - OCTOBER 2010

THE VICAR'S CORNER



Recently there has been a certain amount of controversy generated about the proposed Islamic Center to be located two blocks from the Ground Zero site in Manhattan. There have been all sorts of statements made both supporting and opposing it. I certainly have my opinion, as doubtless many of you do as well. At the same time, I

think this is a marvelous opportunity to review how Episcopalians and Anglicans have traditionally approached issues of this kind.

Here's an outline of how we Anglicans have understood decision-making, whether it's in the public or private sphere:

- What's the controversy or question?
 - Can we form the question we want to answer in an objective way that doesn't imply a particular conclusion one way or another?
 - What facts do we know already?
 - What do we know objectively about the situation at hand already?
 - What does Scripture say about this?
 - How does the Holy Bible, interpreted non-literally with all the tools we have at our disposal, inform this situation or question?
 - What is the text, the context, and the subtext of each passage we are considering?
 - What does Tradition say about this?
 - How do the Creeds, the Early Fathers, and the Ecumenical Councils inform this question? Other sources?
 - How does the *Book of Common Prayer* inform us?
 - What does Reason say about this?
 - What do others say about this? Leaders of various kinds? Publications? Research?
 - What is our own community saying about this?
 - What are our own hearts and minds telling us?
 - What does our community say about our preliminary thoughts and conclusions?
- What conclusions can we now draw about the situation or case?

You might already recognize the references to Scripture, Tradition, and reason. That's the famous "3-legged stool" of Anglican thought first articulated by Richard Hooker, perhaps the first of the great Anglican theologians. Writing in the time of Elizabeth I of England (1593) it was Hooker who first brought together the three strands of what is now commonly accepted as how Anglicans do theology and apply it to the affairs and events of the day.

Theological thinking isn't always easy, and it can seem that the process I've outlined above is very in-depth. And it is. One of the hallmarks of Anglican theology is its rigor and openness to all the tools that God has given us to use. Our goal is not to arrive at any given conclusion, but to proceed carefully and with due respect to all the sources that inform us. So it's always a good idea to go through the same process each time.

Sometimes we don't have the luxury of taking each step in turn, whether for reasons of time or whatever. There is one shortcut that's often worth exploring that may allow one to come to a provisional conclusion, one that still needs to be fully tested through the use of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, and yet may still be useful when needed. And that's the Baptismal Covenant. The Covenant is a nice synopsis in many ways of the overarching principles derived from the Bible, from the prior thinking of the Church, and from careful reasoning of others. Here it is again, slightly edited (BCP p. 301-302):

- God the Father created all things.
- God the Son, Jesus Christ, is both human and divine who lived and died and rose again.
- God the Holy Spirit continually renews and inspires all.
- In response, we will continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

- We will persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- We will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- We will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.
- We will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

So in any ethical situation, you can always ask whether your proposed action or conclusion is consonant with each part of the Baptismal Covenant. If you find that maybe it's not, that would be a time to stop and do more reflection, perhaps using the full Anglican tripod to help you.

It's completely possible, of course, that faithful Anglicans can use the full theological process above and still come to different conclusions. That is another of the hallmarks of Anglican and Episcopalian thought: we honor the same general principles and use the same tools to make decisions, but we respect each other even when we come to different places in our moral decision-making.

So what do I think about the proposed Islamic Center? I think the Baptismal Covenant does indeed directly inform my thinking here, but I'm more interested in what you think? I invite you to use the Covenant for yourself, and if you'd like, share your conclusions. Each of us are theologians, and the theological tools we all have available are there for our use. So let's use them!

Fr. Bob

FROM THE WARDENS

This fall season many events have been happening at St. Thomas'!

Scaffolding was put in place, and the Sheriff's Work Assistance Program came to give our church a physical "face lift." The folks have been helping out during Parish Work Days are giving St. Thomas' a

spiritual "face lift" too. We are truly blessed by all who participate in every single way that they are able!

We'd like to announce a special event for January: a **Wardens' Dinner**, to be held in the Community Room on Friday evening, January 7, 2011. It's our hope that all former Wardens will be able to be present and be recognized. Watch for more details, and feel free to contact either of us for more information.

Nancy Hansen
Sr. Warden

Dan Kadish
Jr. Warden

TREASURER'S REPORT

Parish Finances as of August 31, 2010

	August	Since Jan.
Offerings Received	\$6,603	\$54,161
Offerings Promised	<u>\$5,788</u>	<u>\$46,308</u>
Difference	\$815	\$7,853
Total Income	\$8,219	\$85,657
Total Expenses	<u>\$12,417</u>	<u>\$102,194</u>
Difference	-\$4,198	-\$16,537

Unrestricted Cash on hand: \$19,576

Thank you to all who have contributed! We greatly depend on your pledges and are grateful for your support.

"FUN-RAISERS"

We will be holding a **Pampered Chef Party** in the community room on Friday, October 22, 2010 at 7:30pm. Enjoy an evening of fun, cooking and eating and a presentation of high quality affordable kitchen tools. Bring some neighbors and friends with you. There will be an RSVP sign up poster in the lobby so we know how many will be attending.

We are holding a **cell phone-raiser** on a continuous basis all year long. Any kind of cell phone with the batteries plus any brand of inkjet or laser cartridges can be recycled. Help protect the environment and also help St Thomas in its fundraising efforts. Ask for donations from your employers, neighbors & friends. Please help!

Wells Fargo will pay St Thomas \$ 300.00 for any refinance or new mortgage that is obtained through Bob Goldwick, Mortgage Representative. Please pass the word on to friends and family. Last year we received \$600.00 for 2 referrals that mentioned St Thomas. Bob can be reached directly on his cell phone at 973-713-1416 or ask Linda Lazicki for more information. Remember you must mention St Thomas for us to get the check!

Thanks to those who helped out with the Flea Market/ Craft & Vendor Fair. We made approx \$1,300.00. It was a beautiful relaxing day and the kids sure did enjoy Dante the alpaca and the pony rides!

Have ideas for fundraisers or social events? Please email Linda at c21lazicki@aol.com. All ideas will be considered. ...

MEMBER TO MEMBER

By Parishioners, for Parishioners. To add an item, please call or email the office!

Items Wanted and Items Offered: For Rent, 1 BR Condo, 1200 sq. ft. Call Irene Engel at 973-827-5579.

Help Offered, Help Wanted:

Computer Help Needed! If you can help get my computer back on the Internet, please call me - Dave Mertens 973- 209-4320.

DONORS' ROLL

St. Thomas' depends so much on the free gifts of time, talent, and treasure from members and friends as well. Here's what has recently been contributed for the well-being of the parish:

A box (10 reams of copy paper)
2 reams of copy paper
Food for VBS, the Parish Picnic, and Parish Work Day
A new wall projector – donated by the St. Thomas' ECW
Parish Work Day labor and materials
Ongoing support for the bulletins
Flowers for the Altar

Thank you to all our donors. If you know of or donated something yourself, please let us know!

NEW MEMBERS

Please help welcome the following new members and families to the St. Thomas community:

Michael, Nora, August, and Abigail Gurvich
Michael and Mick Rehill
Jason Romero
Ed, Mary, Michael, and Nicole Sturtevant

FROM THE BISHOP:

“If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

I often think of this West African proverb as I punch yet another northern New Jersey address into my GPS system. I know my destination, but I am rather oblivious to the roads involved, since the route is determined through the wonders of modern technology and is projected on a small but readable screen. I have learned to trust this little machine; and while it has devised some rather bizarre itineraries – which always seems to be the case in Jersey City; and never fails to get confused over swatches of roadways near Hope, it always directs me where I need to go.

I have become dependent on my GPS. I wouldn't know how to get around the diocese without it. But as important as it is for short jaunts and day to day travel, it is not equipped to plot the journey of the soul. It can't find a route for the ultimate direction of my life. I need faith for that. Along with vision.

For as long as there has been an Episcopal Church (and the Anglican Church before that), there has been a Book of Common Prayer. As the church has evolved, the Prayer Book has been revised. The BCP is our liturgical GPS – it gets us from Advent to Pentecost by offering a lectionary of biblical readings, seasonal prayers and liturgies. The Prayer Book is the foundation of who we are. As a friend of mine, a priest, once said, “the Prayer Book is the floor upon which I dance.”

Yet for us to dance with full freedom and

deep joy, we need to invest the Prayer Book with our faith and vision. Faith is a gift from the living Christ; vision is the picture that emerges as we develop an ongoing relationship with that faith. We all need to develop that vision.

For the past year, we as a diocese have been living into a mission statement – equipping congregations, empowering people, engaging the world – with the hope and justice of Jesus. It is more than a clever letterhead statement: it has reorganized our work as a diocese; it has helped define what we are called to do – and perhaps as importantly, helped to clarify what we are not called to do. It has aligned our ministry, and has become the mirror for all decisions.

And from the mission statement, a vision has emerged. It is being presented this fall to various groups across the diocese. It is longer than the mission statement. It will be printed in the next issue of the *Voice*, in preparation for the 2011 Diocesan Convention. It presents a verbal picture for where I see we are headed. As the mission statement is the mirror for all decisions, the vision portrait will become the blueprint for all actions.

A vision portrait is a roadmap for the soul. Our lives tend to be governed by the list of tasks in front of us; and we plan it from one immediate destination to another. The soul yearns for more than that – the soul desires to have our horizons expanded, our hearts stretched and our minds broadened. A vision for the soul takes us beyond the next budget cycle or program year or building project (or the next immediate destination); and leads us into a more abiding relationship with the faith giver, into a more committed life of discipleship – and to a destination for our individual and common mission. And a level of freedom that is more than we can ask for or imagine. May it be so.

+ Mark M. Beckwith

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

307 State Route 94, Vernon NJ 07462
 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 welcoming 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.

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Primary Leadership</u>
Chairperson	Fr. Bob
Education	Fr. Bob Nancy Hansen (2010)
Fundraising	Linda Lazicki (2012)
Financial/Administration	Kathy Moore (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) Tom Brath (2010)
Worship, Pastoral Care, Communications	Fr. Bob

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
Pledge Accountant	Rich Poplaski
Sunday School Director	Nancy Hansen