

Dear Friends,

This Lent I would like to have a conversation with you about the eucharistic life, a way which most of us in this church follow. What does it mean to come to the Lord's table each week, and how do we live out that meaning in our daily lives? On four Sunday mornings we will gather to learn about the history, theology, and practice of the Eucharist, and to discuss its meaning for us today.

Paul Moore, who was later in life to become Bishop of New York, reflects in his autobiography, *Presences: a Bishop's Life in the City*, on his growing understanding of the eucharistic life. He grew up in a very privileged family in Madison, went to fine schools, went to war as a Marine in the South Pacific, and felt the call to the priesthood. Just out of the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan, he was ordained in 1949 and began his ministry at Grace Church in Jersey City. He writes of his ministry with the people there:

(This) community had two centers: the table that was the altar, where we believed our risen Lord came into the flesh and blood of all who received, binding us together in his body through the Sacrament of the Bread of Life; and the kitchen table, where we broke ordinary bread, cried, laughed, and made friends with those whom we tried to serve.

These principles, so theoretical at the seminary, soon became the stuff of everyday life. The Eucharist was so real there. It fed us, strengthened us to go out and love the people we met; it inspired us to try as best we could to bring the justice of God's Kingdom to the broken city in which we lived. By learning the pattern of God's Kingdom in the liturgy, we could discover its shape in the world around us. (pp. 116-117)

Bishop Moore learned through his experience as a young pastor what the Eucharist meant, to him as a man seeking to be faithful, and in the life of his community. This, he says, became much more than book learning: the Eucharist was a way of life.

Our Lenten time together will give each of us an opportunity to learn where our worship around Christ's table comes from, what it has meant in the life of the Church, and what it means for each of us. Lent is a time for learning, deepening, and rededicating. I hope that you can join us on these four Sunday mornings, and that you will have a blessed preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Charles Rice, Interim Vicar

FROM THE SEARCH COMMITTEE:

As of this writing St. Thomas' profile is ready to go to press and our application has been submitted to the Diocese for input into their deployment computer. Once we receive final signoff from the diocese on everything we have submitted to them, we leave a time slot open for submissions of interested candidates. We are confident that our portrayal of life at St. Thomas' will return some interesting applicants. Then we start to interview and hear them preach and narrow the list down to some persons we feel are a good match for our congregation. As the timeline for the next phase of our search comes into sharper focus, we will be able to give the congregation more details. We are scheduling another meeting with Canon Carter Echols, our Congregational Deployment Officer, to review our Search and Discernment Phases. Please feel free to approach any member of the committee if you have questions or concerns.

This is an exciting time in the life of St. Thomas'. Please keep the work of the Search Committee and this journey of St. Thomas' in your prayers!

Your Search Committee: Kathy Moore (co-chair), Pam Schulien (co-chair), Terry Taylor, Carol Poplaski, Paulette Beer, Lois Mayer, Michael Clouse, Michael Wiedbrauk, Randy Hammons, Bill Shapiro

STEWARDSHIP

To date we have received 61 pledges for a total of \$90,688.

The average yearly pledge is \$1487. The average weekly pledge is \$28.60.

Of our monetary pledges:

10 were new

14 were raised

27 were unchanged

10 were lowered

18 of the pledgers from 2006 have not yet pledged for 2007

ALTAR GUILD

The 40 days of Lent is a solemn season, beginning with Ash Wednesday. Liturgies are subdued and penitential in nature. The altar frontal will be changed to an off white cloth of a heavy weave, almost a sack cloth. We will be changing the colors in the church to violet, until Holy Week when the color is then changed to oxblood. The violet signifies the penitential nature and mood of Lent, and oxblood reminds of our Lord's sacrifice.

The flowers will be changed to dried flower arrangements, again a reminder of the penitential nature and sacrifice of our Lord.

Carol Poplaski

OUTREACH

I thank the 21 parishioners who contributed to the United Thank Offering. Our church contribution was \$390. Our parish has been very faithful in supporting UTO. Keep up the good work. We have much to be thankful for.

Ernestine Andersen

A New Plan for the Nursery on Sunday Mornings

For a number of years the young people of the congregation—often those who have been recently confirmed—have cared for infants and young children during the 10 o'clock service. They have enjoyed doing that, and we can be sure that both parents and the congregation as a whole are grateful for their service. And no doubt some will have gained experience that will be valuable in years to come!

The Executive Committee, taking into account a number of considerations, has decided upon a new plan for the nursery. We will ask for adult volunteers to be in the nursery from 9:45 until 11:15 each Sunday. Among these volunteers will no doubt be parents of infants and young children, but there will be others who will want to share in this ministry to the families of our parish. You will find a sign-up sheet in the narthex, where you can volunteer for a Sunday morning.

Young members of the congregation who would like the experience of caring for children can put their names on a roster of volunteers. There will be an adult in the nursery every Sunday, but it may be that a young person would want to serve alongside the adult in charge. It is the hope of the Executive Committee and the Interim Vicar that this new arrangement will enable our young people to be in worship each Sunday. That seems especially important for those at the age of confirmation who are learning and growing in their faith.

Youth Mission Day in April

On a Saturday in April—it will be either April 14 or 28—the young people of our church, ages 10 and up—will go on a mission trip to Paterson. Our host will be Mr. Timothy Evans, the founder and director of P.A.R.K.S., an organization seeking to provide playgrounds for the children of Paterson. We will have the opportunity to clean up a small park, to plant spring flowers, and to meet the children and young people of Paterson.

We plan to leave from the church at 9:30 a.m., to spend about 3 hours on the project—with a break for lunch, make a stop at the Great Falls of the Passaic—and be back in Vernon by about 4 o'clock. Several parents have volunteered already, and others who would like to help with driving, preparing food, etc., are welcome.

On the Sunday after our trip, we will observe World Mission Day at the 10 o'clock service. This will be an opportunity to share with the congregation our experience on the mission in Paterson.

Lenten Forum: The Eucharistic Life

On four Sundays in Lent—February 25, March 4, 18, and 25—we will gather to discuss the history, theology, and practice of the Eucharist, the central act of worship in the Episcopal Church. We hope to go even further and ask: What is the meaning of the Eucharist in our daily lives? What difference does it make to the decisions we make and the way we live with others that we come each week to celebrate together around the table of our Lord? These times together will be informal, not too tightly structured, leaving time for questions and discussion. The topics that will guide our conversations will be, roughly: How did we get the Eucharist? How did it develop in the life of the Church, especially among Anglicans? What do the various parts of the communion liturgy mean—why do we do certain things the way we do? What does it mean to speak of “the eucharistic life”?

Come and join us for coffee and breakfast breads and a good time of learning and conversation. We will start at 9 and conclude at 9:45.

Sussex County Interfaith Hospitality Network (SCHIN)

St. Thomas' will be hosting Interfaith Hospitality Network guests for two weeks beginning on Sunday, March 18th to Sunday, April 1st. During this time, volunteers are needed to staff shifts when guests are in the building. This means:

- 1) preparing and hosting dinner, sleeping over and getting guests out the door on the weekdays or
- 2) preparing a hot breakfast, lunch or dinner on the weekends, just keeping company during the day or sleeping over at night.

We are fortunate and thankful to have an active support church in Vernon United Methodist next door.

The signup sheets are posted on the bulletin board near the ladies' room along with a wish list for gift cards. During the time guests are with us, we need to replenish food or drink supplies and other needs that arise. The gift cards give us the flexibility to pick up whatever is needed over the course of the two weeks. However, what IHN needs most is your time. After many years co-leading this ministry I must say that this is an area that needs a fresh infusion of energy. Very many of our faithful volunteers have moved on from our church - even our lives - and more involved hands might bring new life to this much-needed outreach program. Talk to Pam Schulien or Terry Taylor to find out how you can get involved. We can team you up with someone experienced so you can gain a comfort level helping out in any capacity.

It is truly a way to live out your own Lenten journey, by helping the "least of our brothers."

Pam Schulien

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tue. Feb. 20	5:00 PM 5:30-7 PM 7:00 PM	Evening Prayer Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper Compline
Wed. Feb. 21	6:30 AM 7:30 PM	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion with the imposition of ashes
Sun. Feb. 25, Mar. 4, 18, 25	9-9:45 AM	Lenten Forum
Sun. Mar. 18 - Sun. Apr. 1		SCIHN
Sun. Apr. 1	8 & 10 AM	Sunday of the Passion
Thur. Apr. 5	7:30 PM	Maundy Thursday Holy Communion
Fri. Apr. 6	2:00 PM 7:30 PM	Ecumenical Service in the Chapel Good Friday Liturgy
Sat. Apr. 7	7:00 PM	The Great Vigil of Easter & Baptism
Sun. Apr. 8	6:30 AM 8 & 10 AM	Ecumenical Sunrise Service in the cemetery Festive Holy Eucharist

ECUMENICAL LENTEN SCHEDULE

- Feb. 28th – 8 pm - Our Lady of Fatima R.C. Church – Father Ramilo Esplana, preacher
- Mar. 7th - 8 pm - St. Francis R.C. Church – Pastor Robert Deveaux, preacher
- Mar. 14th – 8 pm - Holy Counselor Lutheran Church – Father Robert Carroll, preacher
- Mar. 21st – 8 pm - Vernon United Methodist Church – Monsignor John Boland, preacher
- Mar. 28th – 8 pm - Glenwood Baptist Church – The Rev. Dr. Charles Rice, preacher
- Apr. 4th – 8 pm - McAfee Bible Church – The Rev. James R. Crouthamel, preacher
- Apr. 6th – Good Friday – 2 pm - St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Pastor Nik Fontana, preacher
- Apr. 8th – Easter – 6:30 am Sunrise Service – United Methodist Church Cemetery –
(no preacher yet)

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

In this season of Epiphany, I give thanks for the ministries of all the members of this Church and the ways in which each baptized person is working to transform this world into a home for God's people. This mission of healing and reconciliation we share is not something we were born knowing or understanding, and we recall that one of the great and ancient roles of the church has been to educate and form its members.

In the early church, those about to be baptized took three years to prepare for their ministries. Since 1999 we have celebrated the first Sunday in February as Theological Education Sunday, an occasion for the Church to emphasize lifelong learning for its people.

This last June, the 75th General Convention requested the Presiding Bishop to continue to support this special day, not only to encourage education in seminaries but also to invite congregations, dioceses, and other networks throughout the church to join in this mission. I encourage you to remember that education is the right and responsibility of all the baptized, in a process that continues for as long as we have breath.

Your servant in Christ,

The Most Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate

We will observe Theological Education Sunday later in the year.