



Bellringer

Rector:
The Rev. Bradley C. Dyche

august@bestweb.net, wstacrotan.org

March 2007

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church ♦ 6 Old Post Road North, Croton on Hudson, NY 10520 ♦ 914-271-3501 (Office)

March 2007

2	Friday	7:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross
3	Saturday	5:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist II
4	<u>The Second Sunday in Lent</u>		
		8:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist I
		10:00 a.m.	Children's Eucharist (no Sunday School)
		6:00 p.m.	House Church at the Hoffmans' home
5	Monday	7:30 p.m.	Outreach Committee Meeting
6	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
7	Wednesday	12:00 noon	First Wednesday Gathering at church
9	Friday	7:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross
10	Saturday	5:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist II
11	<u>The Third Sunday in Lent</u>		
		8:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist I
		9:45 a.m.	Sunday School
		10:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist II
		11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour Outreach Fair
		11:15 a.m.	Youth Council Meeting
		3:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Walking Together Program at Asbury Methodist Church
		6:00 p.m.	House Church at the Moore/Rosenows' home
13	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
16	Friday	7:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross
17	Saturday	5:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist II, The Rev. Betsy Johns Roadman preaching and celebrating
18	<u>The Third Sunday in Lent, The Rev. Betsy Johns Roadman preaching and celebrating</u>		
		8:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist I,
		9:45 a.m.	Sunday School
		10:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist II
		3:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Walking Together program at Asbury Methodist Church
20	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
21	Wednesday	6:00 p.m.	House Church at the Lees' home
		8:00 p.m.	Vestry Meeting
23	Friday	7:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross
24	Saturday	5:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist II
25	<u>The Fourth Sunday in Lent</u>		
		8:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist I
		9:45 a.m.	Sunday School
		10:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist II
		3:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Walking Together program at Temple Israel
27	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
30	Friday	7:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross

Walking Together, a program to bring Christian, Jewish and Muslim families together, will begin its seventh year in March. The program is open to fourth through seventh graders and their parents. Register soon since space is limited. Please call Becky Haynes (271-3166) to RSVP or see the back table in the church for more information.

Youth Council elect ed new officers at our Annual Meeting on January 28. They are: President: Meredith West; Vice President: Jack Newton; Secretary: Chris Lawton; Treasurer: Claire Leyden



March 2007

Greetings All,

February is the shortest month, but it is a busy month. And as I write this letter, it is only half over. But some amazing things have been happening here at St. A's, and I hope that you will take some time, in the midst of the hectic nature of February, to slow down and share this moment. First, as many of you know, I have to say that February was personally exciting for me. I **got to go to Israel** for nine days to both explore sites of Biblical interest and reflect on the current political situation in the Israeli/Arab conflict. I include my sermon from the following Sunday to share with you some of my thoughts. And on **March 4th, after the 10 AM** service, I invite anyone who would like to hear my further reflections to the Parish House for a meeting and discussion. I want to thank all of those who helped in my absence.

But February was also our **Vestry Retreat**. Over February 3rd and 4th, our Vestry met at the Mariandale Conference Center in Ossining (big trip, I know). While there, we got to know one another, engaged in Bible Studies, shared meals, and discussed our Church's past, present, and future. For those of you able to be at the **Annual Meeting**, you know that I have asked that we enter into a period of discernment. We as a parish, I believe, need to explore how we can continue to meet the needs of our current members and facilitate the opportunity for further parish growth. As I have claimed, we are currently unable to even seat our current members let alone incorporate new ones. Worsening these factors, research suggests that **when the pews are 80 percent full at a service, it will stop growing**. This research carries **two important implications**. First, as we are already full, we are not meeting the needs of current members. It is difficult to facilitate peace and reflection, or even fun, when we are crammed full. Secondly, we will not be able to grow. In fact, the research seems to suggest that as we are over-capacity, we will probably begin to see attrition at worst or hovering at current size at best.

Two immediate solutions have come to mind: change our services so that there are two Sunday morning services which invite and include children

AND/OR change our buildings. Both solutions have inherent difficulties and benefits. Can you see the dollar signs glazing over my eyes? The Vestry has known for some time that we need to explore these issues, but the Vestry Retreat provided a time for us to actually delve into these issues.

Fortunately, I believe, we realized that this work requires more time and energy than the Vestry can extend at this point. We decided that a **Discernment Committee**, much like our search committee, would need to be formed. In the coming weeks, we will be forming this committee of the Vestry. And the wardens and I will be leading them to think about how to begin this process of exploring our options. Luckily, some of these methods have been used and tested, and we have research that can help our group in the decision making process (and there are consultants and conferences that we will also be researching).

But this brings to mind a concern I have about all these changes. We have just changed leadership. We have made other changes as a result, and now we are further imagining changes which could have huge impact on our future as a congregation! How do we maintain a sense of God, peace, and God's love in the midst of all these changes? In all reality, I find that I have to personally have faith in the changelessness of God. Indeed, that is the very message of Lent and Easter. In Lent, we remember how much of our lives change all the time. We remember that we are mortal and the inherent un-last-ability of that. In Easter, we see that God, even after being persecuted and wrongfully murdered comes back in peace and with forgiveness. And we see that the only thing that lasts and is changeless is that love. If we can put our faith in that God, we can trust that no matter where we might be headed as a congregation, God will be there to give us guidance and peace, and a sense of changelessness. I invite us all to hold St. A's in your prayers so that we might better discern what God is calling us to be in this place.

God's Peace,

Bradley



*Sermon Delivered on February 17th and 18th, 2007
by the Rector*

As many of you know, this Tuesday I returned from a nine day trip to Israel. I might add that I sat in the middle seat both ways, which I believe was doing my part to meditate on the suffering of our Lord. I went with a group of Clergy, both Christian and Jewish along with some other facilitators. It was a pilgrimage that some of you have experienced personally, and one that all of us should undergo at some point in our lives. My journey to Israel, however, was not only about visiting the Holy Sites. We did travel to Galilee and Nazareth. We saw Jerusalem and the Judean Wilderness. But my trip was really primarily focused on the modern, contemporary Israeli/Arab conflicts in the region, no light easy topic. In fact, the group of 13 of us listened to anywhere from 4 -7 lectures a day to gain a better sense of the complexity there and to attempt to reflect on potential solutions. The list of speakers was exhaustive and exhausting. We heard from Israeli Defense Forces who took us on tours of the wall and fence telling us where to stand to avoid snipers. We also heard from Labor Party members, from West Bank Jewish Settlers, from Palestinian College Professors, from Arabs who live in Israel proper, from Palestinian College Students, from a Minister of Foreign Affairs, from a Jewish Doctor who treats Palestinian Patients, from an Episcopal Palestinian Doctor who goes through check -points every day for his work, from a Catholic Bishop and a Melkite Archbishop, from the Chief Rabbi in Haifa, and from Jewish Mothers who experienced first hand the recent war with Hezbollah, from a Sufi Sheik, from a Beth Shalom practitioner, from recent Jewish immigrants to Israel, from a Catholic Nun, from government advisors, from members of the Druze religion who work with lower income children, from Kibbutzniks, from Muslim professors at a teachers' college who seek to empower Arab women, and finally, last but not least, a Messianic Jew. As you might well imagine, I still struggle with how to put the pieces of the puzzle together. I am still processing what I have seen and heard. And, indeed, we were told from the first moment that we arrived that we would be challenged and stretched by the complexities of the area and the peace process. And we were told that

we would probably leave confused by those complexities. And we did.

On no day was this complexity more omnipresent than on the day that we arrived in Jerusalem. On that day, before we arrived at the old city proper, we stood on Mt. Scopus, looking down at the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. We were taking our postcard pictures of the gold leafed dome. Our tour guide, Reuven had brought some wine. He poured the white wine into plastic cups and passed it around for a toast before we entered this holy city. We were embarking on something amazing together, and we were attempting to share a moment. But as we were toasting and looking at the beautiful city, we began to hear sounds that were like trucks going over steel plates on a New York highway. We looked down and saw the tear gas clouds rising over the Temple Mount and floods of Israeli-Arabs running down the streets. The wine suddenly became a numbing agent instead of a toasting one. And I have since realized that this ironic experience of a toast and tear gas would become a metaphor for our trip. We desperately wanted to celebrate our time in the Holy Land, and efforts on the part of both some Israelis and some Palestinians to work toward peace, and we were excited to get first hand information instead of what has often incorrectly been handed to us by journalists. But the possibility for what the Holy Land should be, an altogether oasis of peace, always seemed just out of our grasp.

Today is the last Sunday before we begin the 40 day trudge of Lent. Starting Wednesday, we begin to prepare ourselves in body and mind and spirit for the coming celebration of Easter. And on the Sunday before Lent, we always hear the same Gospel reading, that of the Transfiguration. And today, I would like to explore the meaning of the Transfiguration in the context of my recent travels and think about how we might take both into our observance of Lent here.

In today's Gospel, we hear Luke's account of Jesus going up on a Mountain, and we are told that this transfiguring happens about 8 days after Peter has acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the messiah. It is important to note this allusion to prior events. At that time, Peter's realization that Jesus is the Christ was not an easy one. Peter might have understood that Jesus was the Messiah, but he did not understand what being the Messiah entailed. Peter wanted Jesus to march into Jerusalem as a



King, to proclaim power and rule as the way that God works. Today's account of the Transfiguration is best understood as an epilogue to this misunderstanding. In the event of the Transfiguration, we see Jesus, James, John, and Peter on the top of a mountain. We see Jesus communing with God, and his face beaming light as a result. And then we hear Peter, immediately, going to his old ideals, wanting Jesus to be more powerful. Peter says, "... let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah". In other words, Peter wants to make a cathedral, a place to enshrine Jesus, a throne, a place similar to the lower case "g" gods. It seems lovely at first. But it is the same misconstrued message as before. Peter wants Jesus to be enthroned and not a servant to humanity. Peter wants Jesus isolated on a mountain, separated from the people, and away from potential harm. Jesus refuses. He goes back down from the mountaintop and sets his face toward Jerusalem where he will openly confront the pain of the world. Jesus puts his hope in love, forgiveness, and serving one another instead of either power or a shined enthronement.

The implications from this account of what groups of us Christians should be are large. We as churches not only have a responsibility to be places of peace, to be an oasis from the world at the top of a mountain, we also have a responsibility to come down from the mountain and engage the world as Jesus came down after the Transfiguration. In light of the recent conflicts that I have seen and how the possibility of their growing is real, I am also more convinced than ever that the salvation of our world, inspired by the love of God, is also in our hands and is partly our responsibility. And only by coming down from the mountain can we make this world better. Traditionally, in Lent, there is an invitation to individuals to give something up or take something on. It is a way to exercise our spiritual muscles as a means to center us on God. It is a sort of Holy Gym with 40 days of reps, a training ground for something more. This year, I am inviting us all, as a community and as individuals, to by-pass the Holy gym of leaving behind chocolate and soda and move into the place of taking on the applied, actual work of the salvation of our world, both as individuals and as a community with our prayers and with our actions.

For the past two years, this community has reflected on and acted on an urge to reach out to the

community around us, to walk down from the mountaintops and to care for others. It was something that was focused on in my interviews here. And we have succeeded in organizing ourselves. We are focused on sharing our resources, both a share of our financial ones and more importantly our other resources of hands, hearts, and bodies. And, the work of reaching out will be our theme for Lent. It ties together the immediacy that I have seen in Israel, the story of the Transfiguration, and one opportunity for us to be receptive to the coming celebration of Easter. During Lent, we will hear from the youth Group of St. John's, Kingston about an opportunity to reach out to AIDS orphans in Tanzania as organized by this Episcopal Diocese, and in following weeks, we will also begin talking about other volunteer opportunities. In a sense, it culminates when we as a Church go to Mississippi during Holy Week, with 21 parishioners as our representatives.

Although I have not been able to fully comprehend what I saw and learned in Israel, I do know this: In our current world, it will not do to remain isolated in our faith. This cannot be a shrine, even though I hope it is a place of refreshment and peace. We must use it as a launching pad for the love of God. With the Transfiguration, Jesus is changed, Peter's understanding of God is eventually changed, and we likewise are invited to be changed. It is not an isolated event but an opportunity for us to transform how we look at the world, to see a primary value on using our relationships, our countries, our churches, and our homes to be instruments of God's love. One of the more radical speakers for my trip in Israel became somewhat belligerent and asked the question of us, "Why must Americans think that there is a solution for every problem?" A fellow Episcopal priest mused, "Perhaps it is because our culture has been formed in part by Christianity and seeks always to find reconciliation." This is the message of the Transfiguration. We seek reconciliation with one another and with God. And because this message is desperately needed, we cannot enshrine it or hide it. We must seek to live into it and share it with the world.



First Wednesday for March will be on March 7 starting at 12:00 with Noonday prayer and Bible Study, with pizza lunch to follow.



At the Vestry Retreat, the Vestry reflected on recent comments and questions from parishioners about St. A's vision for outreach and what outreach includes. The Vestry invited the Outreach Committee to create a Mission Statement as a way of defining what we mean (and plan to do) to focus St. A's on outreach. This is what the Outreach Committee has drafted.

At the Outreach meeting in February the committee adopted the following as its mission statement:

We are called at our baptism to proclaim the Good News of God, not only by word, but also by example; to seek and serve Christ in all persons; to love our neighbors as ourselves; to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

The Outreach Committee of St Augustine's Episcopal Church will attempt to discern what work God is calling us to do as a community, both here at home and in the world, whether by our own labors or by financially supporting the efforts of others.

To further this mission as Father Brad shared with us in his sermon last week, Lent will concentrate this year on opportunities for us as a parish to fulfill this call. In addition to our presentation by Carpenter's Kids on February 25 we will hear from local organizations in an Outreach Fair on March 11 and Larry Roadman on Micro lending (This was the concept for which a Nobel prize in Economics was won this year by the creator of the concept) on March 25.

Carpenter's Kids Program: On the last Sunday in February we heard from the Youth Group of St. John's Kingston about their trip to Tanzania and involvement in the Carpenter's Kids Program which helps provide education for AIDS orphans in that country. If you would like to know more and/or would like to sponsor a child for 5 years at \$50 per year (\$250 over 5 years), or for just one year, please contact the parish office at 271-3501, august@bestweb.net.

St. A's Mission Trip: We're almost halfway there! The St. A's Mississippi Volunteers are now up to 22: 13 teens and 9 adults. That's more than three times the size of the group that went to Mississippi last year. Fundraising for the April relief trip to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi has already brought in more

than \$4000 of the \$9000 needed, both through the sales of "shares" in the trip, and through donations received from the group's fundraising letters to friends and family. The group will still be selling trip shares for the next few weeks, so look for their map at coffee hour!

Cursillo at Mariandale: One of our EFM participants, Yvonne Davies, will be the lay rector of this short course to be offered at Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining over the weekend of May 17 -20. For more information, please see the bulletin board in the Parish Hall, or contact Yvonne at 762-6298 or yon@sysmatrix.net.

Lenten Events 2007: Beyond our Walls
St. A's and our Outreach to the Community, the Nation, and the World

Sunday, March 4th at the 10 AM service: Come listen to Chris Moore, a professional reader, share a story for the sermon.

Sunday, March 4th at 6:00 PM: House Church at the home of Tim, Elizabeth, Sarah and Alexandra Hoffman. Children are welcome. They will supply the entree. They ask that you bring something else to share. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the parish kitchen.

Sunday, March 11th: Outreach Fair! At Coffee Hour following the 10 AM liturgy, come find out about the various ways to volunteer through St. A's, and find out about the work we do to help some community operations.

Sunday, March 11th: Following the 10 AM Liturgy, younger children, 5-8, are invited to a class about Communion in the Sanctuary.

Sunday, March 11th at 6:00 PM: House Church at the home of Chuck, Chris, Bennett, and Nina Rosenow. Children are welcome. They will supply the entree. They ask that you bring something else to share. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the parish kitchen.

Saturday and Sunday, March 17th- 18th: Betsy Roadman preaches at weekend services.

Wednesday, March 21st at 6:00 PM: House Church at the home of Heidi, John, and Alex Lee. Children Welcome. They will supply the entree. They ask that you bring something else to share. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the parish kitchen.

Sunday, March 25th: After 10 AM service, Adults are invited to hear Larry Roadman speak about Micro-Credit lending agencies.

Sunday, March 25th: After 10 AM service, Older children, 7-12, are invited to join Father Brad in Church for a lesson about our Church Services

Holy Week at St. A's:

Palm Sunday, April 1st: 9:45 Liturgy of the Palms in the Parish Hall. Children's Event will be held during the service.

Maundy Thursday, April 5th: Agape Meal and Maundy Thursday Liturgy. Enjoy a meal with friends. The church will provide some mainstays, and invites you to bring some simple, Middle-eastern fair for this traditional meal followed by the service.

Maundy Thursday, April 5th at 9:00 PM: Following the Maundy Thursday Liturgy, sign up to keep vigil in the Sanctuary overnight.

Good Friday, April 6th: Good Friday Liturgy at 12 Noon

Holy Saturday, April 7th: Easter Vigil at 7 PM.

Easter Day: April 8th: Easter Day: services at 9 and 11 AM. Children's activities will be provided during the sermon. Easter Egg Hunt will follow the 11 AM service.

April - Save the Dates: Deacon Keith will offer a two-session adult education program on the timely subject of "Just War". The dates are April 22nd and April 29th, and the meetings will take place in the Parish House after the 10 AM liturgy. Look for more details in the April Bellringer.

Rector: The Rev. Bradley C. Dyche
Deacon: The Rev. Deacon Keith McKenna
Rector Emeritus: The Rev. David B. Wayne

2007 VESTRY MEMBERS

Senior Warden: Duncan Cleary Junior Warden: Dana Garrett
Treasurer: Holly Anzani Clerk: Chris Moore
Jeff Lawton Laura Seitz
Louise Levey Suzanne Smith
Chris Moore Loren Zack

Holly Anzani
Ed Godek
Greg Kaebnick

Meeting Schedule: Vestry, 3rd Wednesday, 8:00 p.m.

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www.stacroton.org

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