



THE COURIER

The Newsletter of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, River Hills, WI July 2014

THE RECTOR'S MUSINGS

This summer I am listening my way again through the Harry Potter series. I am at the beginning of book 6. I have read all the books. Indeed, although I was a Debbie-come-lately to the series (thinking that adults reading the Potter books lacked in intelligence), I finally read the first book to be able to keep up with what the young people in my former parish were talking about. And I was immediately hooked. I then became one of those crazy adults who pre-ordered the books as they came out so that I could get my hands on the next one as soon as possible.

I am struck again as I listen this summer what gems these books are; what essential truths they impart. They are, of course, replete with violent and painful passages. But it's never gratuitous. And I know what is going to happen in the end: Harry defeats the dark lord, Lord Voldemort. But in the process people and creatures he loves dearly, die: Sirius Black, first. Then Albus Dumbledore, followed by Hedwig the owl, and Dobby the elf. I know the stories and the ending and yet I cry again at each death. Rowling is that good a writer.

These books may be written for young adults but I know few "older" adults who have not read at least one of these books. And, among clergy, virtually all of them.

I do not understand the churches that ban the books because they are about "witches and magic." Well, they are. But they are also replete with the most fundamental of Christian virtues and Christian theology. And it's not by accident on the part of the author.

*Harry learns that in order to defeat evil, he has to die.

*In the world of Harry Potter no one succeeds against evil alone. It is only in community that evil is held at bay and only in community that Lord Voldemort is finally killed. It is not Harry who deals the final blow, it's Neville Longbottom.

*People are hugely complex in Harry Potter. They have mixed motivations and not always pure intent. The Potter books teach children that life is complicated and human beings are not monochromatic. Good people do bad things. Bad people do good things, or spawn good things to happen. And it's all used in the end for good.

Forgiveness is needed often, and it is love that is Harry's greatest strength and finally what defeats evil. Harry is not a perfect hero. He's frequently a surly teenager. And he does what he has to do often reluctantly, and often imperfectly. But he does it.

I don't want to draw too close of a comparison because there are differences, but these are also the themes of the Bible and of Christianity. I come to the Bible with the same knowledge and expectations that I now come to a Harry Potter book.

(continued on p. 2)

I know all the stories in the Bible. I've read them many times, and yet, I still cry at the readings of Holy Week. And my heart still hurts when David's friend, Jonathan, dies. I hold my breath to see if Abraham will kill Isaac, and if Joseph gets out of prison. Will Moses be picked up or will he drown? I am angry when Esau sells his birthright and when Judas denies Jesus.

The Bible is full of complex emotions and intents. Cain kills Abel. Jesus gets frustrated often with the dim-witted disciples. Paul gets surly with Mark. And each time my heart twinges. And yet, I know the end of each of the stories. Evil is trampled by love. Forgiveness is offered and accepted. And no one does what they do without others or without God.

Like Harry Potter, I may know the stories of Holy Scripture but I am still transported with words like: "I know that my Redeemer lives!" (Job), "My soul magnifies the Lord. . . !" (Luke), "Choose life. . ." (Deuteronomy), "It is finished. . ." (John), "I thank my God every time I remember you." (Philippians).

My heart is still startled in Holy Scripture by God's whimsies (who else creates a whale just for sport?) and God's fidelity, and God's willingness to honor God's covenant with us, even though we fail again and again at the most basic of human tasks: kindness, forgiveness, and love.

I know each of the stories well and yet I turn to them repeatedly because they speak to me of how God uses every scrap of us, the good and the bad, and uses it all to God's own ends. I read Holy Scripture to remember that. In the midst of challenging days I read Holy Scripture to be surprised again by God's grace.

This summer I find myself reading Scripture and listening to Harry Potter side by side. God is laced all through both. And I find myself confronted again by the truth that God is equally everywhere. Equally. Everywhere. I find some comfort there.

Debra+

Treasurer's Tickler

"... We should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring." 1 John 3:17-18

Saturday, June 28, a group of St. C's members acted on John's commendation to love others in their "actions and true caring" by giving up a beautiful summer Saturday to ponder the challenges of our faith community, specifically around our financial life. As Treasurer I see, on a weekly basis, the dollars and cents of our parish life. We spend carefully and frugally. That is true. It is also true that the projected deficit is real. It is large—\$80,992. If unchecked, we will drain our savings account to zero within a few short years. I was moved by the generosity of the folks who gathered, in giving of their time, but also in giving of their minds and their love, to the work of diminishing the deficit and growing our community even more into who Christ calls us to be in this world; to remember whose we are.

Barbara Eckblad,
Treasurer

I risked losing my job...

I attended a sales meeting a few weeks ago. The message focused on integrity and accountability, and the importance of stepping beyond your comfort zone. This was a function of Wall Street saying that our quarterly earnings fluctuate quarter to quarter more than they would like.

Most of our stock is held by my fellow employees, but Wall Street's point was taken. It boils down to each individual doing what they are called to do because our individual efforts affect every other employee of the company, as well as our families.

During the meeting, we were called out to stand up in front of our peers if we had or had not achieved specific expectations. It was uncomfortable. At one point, more than 100 of us who were supposed to go to a ballroom for a presentation were diverted to another room and given a 6-PAGE POP QUIZ. Four of my peers didn't show up to take the quiz. I wouldn't have wanted to be any of those four.

On that note, a little side story: Our January sales training class included a bright young lady who had the professional opportunity of a lifetime before her. As the VP of Sales spoke to us, she put her feet up on a chair and proceeded to text throughout his presentation. After an unplanned break, the VP returned to continue his presentation. Suddenly, the young woman rose from her seat and walked back to one of the trainers to ask about an incoming text with an unexpected change to her travel itinerary. The trainer took the enterprising young lady to Human Resources, where she signed some departing papers and made her flight home that afternoon. Unemployed. The VP of Sales needs all hands on deck to do really important work. Essentially, when words from above fall on deaf ears, it can affect everyone.

Back to my original story. After the quiz, we continued to the ballroom as planned and heard Dennis Snow, a 22-year veteran of Disney, speak about the Disney experience—including the accountability of each individual who is “on stage.” Visitors go for the rides, but leave noticing the clean grounds, “perfect” environment and the amazing experience. (Unless Space Mountain is closed for repair!)

Now, I pride myself in operating in sensitive interpersonal environments and helping people make change. Often times, the cues I pick up on are subtle and are key to my approach and timing. So, after all that occurred at this meeting, my senses were acute! Up goes the Disney Guru on the stage with his right pant cuff turned down in back. He talks about exuding perfection and how small details can distract. I couldn't believe his cuff was down! Was it intentional? Mr. Snow ended his presentation by showing a photo of a manicured garden with an empty Pepsi can carelessly left behind. Who's job is it to fix the situation? “All of ours,” was the answer.

Next my VP of Sales stepped up on stage to wrap up the meeting. I could not believe my eyes. The back of his left pant cuff was turned down. I felt uneasy. His message was that each one of us is accountable and we affect each other's success. If we don't step up as individuals, we all feel the drag. A bonus plan was presented where if everyone meets their minimum quota by the end of July, we get a our names entered into a drawing for a \$30,000 bonus. If one person in the division doesn't cover the minimum, however, the bonus offer is off the table. It is all or nothing. All hands on or else.

So was it coincidence that two executives in a row spoke about doing what we are supposed to do in sensitive situations because “that is what we do?” They also spoke of making the sacrifice of contribution knowing our mission. Gone are the easy days of benefitting from being on “a winning team” fueled by someone else's effort. You have to contribute beyond your comfort level. If you are not beyond your level of comfort, you aren't living. And if you aren't living to your fullest, then you are just making time.

What I did next was deeply out of my comfort zone. The following email to my VP of Sales explains:

(continued on p. 5)

Qs from the Pews

Dear priest,

I overheard you say recently that there is some suspect theology at play in various parts of Christianity. What did you mean by that? Signed, interested.

Dear interested,

Editor's Note: 'Qs from the Pews' are taken from questions that come up at Coffee Hour or in conversations with the Rector. If you have a Q to submit for this column, please email the Rector or the office.

Oh my, this question could be answered in a book. The short hand answer is that for some complex reasons, some just about expedience, or poor use of language, we perpetuate some faulty theology in the church. Here are some examples:

*“Two become one.” In a marriage, two do *not* become one. Hopefully what happens is that two independent and healthy individuals choose to join their lives together. We hope further that their love for each other spills over into the world. Or, as the Book of Common Prayer says, (p. 429) “Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others.” But they do not fuse into one person. That’s bad theology and bad psychology.

*“God takes us into heaven when our time comes,” or its variation, “God must not have wanted him yet,” or “It was part of God’s plan for him to die now.” First, there is not one appointed time for everyone’s death. We die when we die for many and varied reasons. Old people die. Young people die. Babies die. Some deaths are arguably more tragic than others. And God does not “take” us into heaven. God *receives* us into God’s love and grace when we die, but God is not a great body snatcher who “takes” people when God wishes to do so. There is no biblical warrant for that theology but we say it as a means to provide comfort.

Still, one person’s comfort then is another person’s pain. Why did God “take” one person and not another? The answer is that God does not take people at all. God receives, lovingly, gratefully and finally.

*If you doubt you are not a good Christian.” On that one, really? Really? I know of no thinking, biblically-based Christian who does not doubt. If you listen to the Psalms at all you hear the people of God struggling with their faith. They get angry. They are confused. They doubt.

We are not God. As human beings we see the world and our role in it only partially. So, of course, we doubt. We don’t have all the pieces of the puzzle. Only God does. Blessedly, in the Episcopal Church, access to any of the sacraments does not depend upon passing a theology test or being able to explain any of the Creeds. And God remains lovingly close whether we doubt, or not.

One of the ways that we stay out of bad theology is by talking with one another about what we believe and why, and by looking to Scripture to help us understand who God is and who we are before God. Thanks for the question and continuing the conversation.

Signed, the priest

I risked losing my job... (cont'd)

Good morning, Dave.

Let me explain my action yesterday. Dennis Snow spoke of details and responsibility to the company, our team mates and ourselves. Ironically, Dennis' right pant cuff was turned down on the back of his right foot during his presentation.

Next, you appeared on stage and your left pant cuff was turned down. I wondered, "Is this a test to see who is observant and who will effect change in a sensitive situation?" Then I thought, "I may get my butt in trouble by embarrassing you if I am wrong, but I need to do what we do." My last thought was, "What if you came back on stage, and said, "Did anyone notice anything and NOT do anything about it? WHY?"

So, after the meeting I tried to be discreet in helping you with your cuff to positively effect change for my VP of Sales. I only meant for you to look your best and take care of the Pepsi can in the garden.

The gloves are off. The competition is in for a lesson.

Have a great day.

Darrell

VP Sales Response:

It's the little things. Thanks for noticing and addressing! Glad you are on the team Darrell!!

The gloves are indeed off: &

Here are the nuggets:

- 1) Affect change in sensitive situations. It matters that you own your responsibility.
- 2) Give beyond your level of comfort be it personally, professionally, financially or spiritually. It is not without risk. It is not easy, but it is better than being asked, "Why didn't you?"

Jesus did.

Darrell Fischer,
Senior Warden

Meet The Diedrichs



John Diedrich and his wife, Raquel Rutledge, along with their two children, Robert Claud and Daniel, moved back to Milwaukee from Colorado Springs in 2004. Raquel grew up in Shorewood and is a life-long Episcopalian. John grew up in Wauwatosa and was raised Catholic.

They found St. Christopher's after having attended several other Episcopalian churches and first came "on a lark" in the summer of 2006 and never left after that first Sunday.

"It was small and very welcoming," says Raquel. "And on that summer day, the air conditioning was also very welcoming," adds John. Robert Claud is going into eighth grade at Maple Dale and is a sports enthusiast. He runs track and cross country and plays baseball and basketball. He also likes music and plays the saxophone and piano. Daniel, also at Maple Dale, plays baseball for the Glendale Little League and loves technology. Daniel has two pets: a hamster,

Snowball, and a bird known as the Word Bird. The Diedrichs also have two other family pets: a dog named Pocus and Rex, the rabbit. The family likes to go on bike rides, hike, camp and barbecue.

John and Raquel are investigative reporters at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and have both won numerous national awards, including a Pulitzer Prize for Raquel. Most recently, they won an award from the Investigative Reporters and Editors organization for a story about the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "It's really the first time that we have collaborated and worked together during our careers," says John. Formerly, they worked for the Colorado Springs Gazette.

The Diedrichs like the warm and welcoming character of St. Christopher's. Robert Claud enjoys being an acolyte, helping out both at the church and at The Gathering. Daniel likes Sunday school (and admits he misses it during the summer) and the sermons. The entire family likes coffee hour and pancake breakfasts.

Kathy Stanford



Parish leadership hard at work at the Episcopal Church Foundation meeting with Erin Weber-Johnson on June 28th.



What is the Rector's Discretionary Fund?

It has come to my attention that some members of St. Christopher's do not know what the Rector's Discretionary fund is and how the money in this fund is used.

The Rector's Discretionary Fund is money that is kept in a separate checking account under the control of the Rector. The use of the money is reported to the vestry a couple of times a year and is part of the financial review that is required by the diocese.

The money is used by the rector for helping people who have financial hardship or other situations that would not receive parish funding. At St. Christopher's, it has been used for a variety of things over the years. In the past year it has been used for people who need rent assistance, medical assistance, assistance in a domestic violence situation, camp scholarships, emergency food, and support of the diocesan acolyte festival.

As a member of the vestry, I can assure you that we should be proud of our rector for using this fund to minister to those in need.

Many people contribute to this fund when the rector has performed weddings, funeral services, or other things not related directly to normal church services. However, donations to this fund can be made at any time. If you would like to donate to this tax deductible fund, you can mail it, drop it off in the church office, or just put it in the collection plate, earmarking it for the Rector's Discretionary Fund.

If you have any specific questions, I would be happy to answer them. Call me at home at 262-512-1471, or e-mail me at thced40@gmail.com.

Tom Davies,
Junior Warden

News From the Garden

On June 7th, twenty volunteers showed up to plant St. Christopher's first vegetable garden. Under the direction of Ryan Dale from Great Taste who built the seven raised beds, the work was completed in record time thanks to everyone's help. The vegetables that were selected by Ryan for optimum yield are: tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, beans, peppers, and broccoli. Basil, chives, nasturtiums, and marigolds all serve as companion plants in the beds and there are wire trellises for the plants to climb up and shade the vegetables. (*Ed.: See pictures of planting & blessing on the following pages.*)

Despite the record rain, the plants are doing well and we are looking forward to our first harvest later this summer. The Outreach Committee is looking into local food pantries where we can donate the produce.

Currently, there is not a lot of work to do, so until the end of July, we have volunteers looking in every other day to remove weeds, and make sure the plants are climbing the trellises, remove dead leaves, etc. We will need to look in daily as the plants develop and there are plenty of opportunities for those who want to get involved. Please contact Kathy Stanford: 414-345-7698 if you would like to be involved.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the planting and to all who have signed up to tend the garden as it grows. And thank you to Harry Ansley for organizing everyone on planting day.

Kathy Stanford

Planting & Blessing



Planting photographs by Susan Hackl

St. Christopher's Garden



Blessing photographs by Mike DeSisti

Events in July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 Office closed	5
6 9 a.m.: Holy Eucharist <i>Nursery open</i>	7	8	9 6:00 p.m. Reading Group	10	11	12 9:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. St. Christopher's at The Gathering
13 9 a.m.: Holy Eucharist <i>Nursery open</i>	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 9 a.m.: Holy Eucharist <i>Nursery open</i>	21	22 6:30 p.m. Vestry meeting	23	24	25	26
27 9 a.m.: Holy Eucharist with Rays of Light <i>Nursery open</i>	28 Debra away to August 4th	29	30	31		

Another Way to Help The Gathering



The Gathering is looking for donations of items needed by their guests. For the month of July, donations include bottled water, sun screen and baseball caps. If you are able to donate any of these items, bring them to church and put them in the big Panera bag on the table in the community room. We'll see that they get down to the folks who need them.

On the desk in the Community Room, along with the basket for collecting sundries, you will find a plastic bag for collecting bags for sundries' distribution.

July MILESTONES	
BIRTHDAYS	
1	Eleanor Lee
2	Matt Coburn Susan Hackl
4	Peg Dahlman
6	Kip Jacobs
10	Missy Levit
13	Allen Gotz
14	Jennifer Weigel
18	Charles Smith
21	Roy LaBudde
24	Rob Quirk
26	Kyle Jacobs
27	Robby Schmidt
29	Jim Bedore Ted Purtell
31	Dick Hackl
ANNIVERSARIES	
1	Julie & John Carpenter
2	Curt & Lois Degener
3	Laura & Joe Dobrowits
9	Stephanie & Aaron Gardner
18	Dianne & George Walker
20	Katherine & Nick Gerrits
21	Katie & Curt Smith
27	Janie & Clifford Asmuth

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Rector's Email: revdebra@aol.com

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Parish Office

Open Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Staff

The Rev. Debra Trakel, *Rector*

Gust Olson III, *Parish Administrator*

John Beardsley, *Music Director*

Katie Madlung, *Christian Formation Coordinator*

Gloria Bond, *Housekeeper*

Michael Schneider, *Building & Grounds Supervisor*

Vestry – Meets 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Darrell Fischer & Tom Davies, *Wardens*

Janie Asmuth & Harry Ansley, *Co-Clerks*

(2015) - Dolores Mishelow, Dick Hackl, Alan Becker

(2016) - Diane Eisen, Bill Warner

(2017) - Carrie Bedore, Kathy Stanford

Committee and Ministry Contacts

Altar Flowers: Roz Krause

Altar Guild: Judy Scharfenberger

Building & Grounds: Tom Davies

Caring Ministry: M.J. Perry, MaryBeth Ansley

Flower Guild: Helen Sheen

Memorial Garden: Helen Sheen

Outreach: Steve Petrie

Prayer Chain: Kathy Housiaux

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The Holy Eucharist

Summer Sundays 9:00 a.m.

Thursday Eucharist on hiatus until September

Outdoor Labyrinth - open to the public, weather permitting

The Rev. Debra Trakel, *Rector*



Christianity is not just a religion...it's a way of life.