

The Episcopal Diocese of Montana e-Vangel



Gardiner Community Church

A monthly round-up of diocesan outreach and service activities

October 2008

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Stand For Something!

By Jené Matzkanin
St. Mark's, Anaconda

A couple of days ago I went to lunch with a good friend of mine. She was telling me about her relationship and how great it was going. She said that if this guy had ever left her, she would not know what to do. I told her that if she really believed the relationship was right, she'd have to fight. Well, she took my advice literally, and thought she would have to beat up any girl that could possibly replace her. That's not exactly what I meant. By fighting, I meant taking a stand, pleading her case, praying and waiting for reconciliation, as opposed to walking away from the relationship broken hearted and defeated. (Side note: defeat is a lie from the enemy, don't accept defeat, rather be encouraged).

I truly believe that we are to fight for what is right. I believe that we are to take a stand for God. I also believe that we are to fight by proclaiming the good news. I think it's disturbing to hear a believer say something along the lines of, "Just be nice, don't talk about God, we don't want to scare them away." Ironically, I have heard just that in a recent church setting. I fail to understand why there is so much shame in telling other people about the awesome God we serve. I would think that it would be a blessing to be able to tell someone else about the beautiful salvation we have received, and better yet that they could receive it as well. Seems like a no-brainer to me, unfortunately it seems to be more popular to be a closet Christian.

Joshua 24:14 says, "Fear the Lord, Serve Him in sincerity and truth...Serve the Lord." I find that we have two options in regards to serving the Lord. Option one: Stand for the Lord, Option two: Fall for the enemy. By taking a stand for the Lord, we are serving Him. When taking a stand for the Lord, we become His warriors. Once we become warriors we begin contending for broken souls. By taking a stand, we are telling the devil, "NO!" Proverbs 10:25 tells us that "the righteous have an everlasting foundation." Isaiah 40:29 says that "He gives us power and increases our strength." I am definitely thinking that the very opposite would be inevitable when we settle for option number two.

When we come into agreement with option number two, we are not taking a stand for God. We become complacent, and complacency should be considered the devil's top ally. By not consistently doing the works of the Lord, we struggle to grow in Christ. When we stop growing in Christ, we give the enemy a perfect opportunity to infiltrate our faith. He begins triggering our emotions, pushing our buttons, and whispering lies. He takes all that is of God and creates a counterfeit remedy. For instance, God gives us great comfort and peace, which makes us feel good. The enemy puts thoughts into our head that we somehow can create our own sense of peace by making decisions based on emotions rather than biblical truths. For a moment we have peace, we feel good, and then the emptiness sets in. God's peace is everlasting. We then get caught up in the enemy's vicious cycle, continuing to do things in and of ourselves, rather than allowing God to do it for us.

So I say, take a stand! Proclaim the good news! Ignite the fire in one another. Build up that which is right. Stand up to what is wrong. Denounce the shame! Do what you are called to do! Love! Stay active for God, so that He stays active in us!

“Give us clear vision, that we may know where to stand and what to stand for - because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything”. Peter Marshall, US Senate Chaplain 1947

VOTING AS STEWARDSHIP

An Election Day message from Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

As Election Day approaches, I want to remind you that our democracy gives us the opportunity to speak urgently about the many issues and challenges confronting our nation and the world. I would encourage every eligible voter to prayerfully consider the choices before us and commit to using the political process to seek solutions to our society’s most intractable problems. As part of our baptismal vows we commit “to strive for justice and peace among all people” and “respect the dignity of every human being.” As you prepare to vote, I urge you to consider how the Reign of God – a just society – particularly as explicated by the Hebrew prophets and by Jesus, can be made real in our own day.

Our baptismal ministry calls us to transform our communities into something that looks more like that Reign of God. That is our part in God’s mission. We are sent and commissioned to build a society where all have adequate access to health care, where the weakest are protected and God’s creation safeguarded, and where each person has access to the blessings of life. That work requires committed engagement in the civic life of our nation if we seek to make God’s dream more effectively real and complete in this world.

As caretakers and stewards of all of God’s creation, each one of us is responsible for the flourishing of the rest of the human family. As in all elections, on 4 November we have the opportunity to continue working to reconcile and heal the world. I urge every citizen to use this opportunity to motivate our government to respond to, and participate in, building the Reign of God. We prepare the ground for the possibility of more abundant life through our part in the ministry of governance.

Voting and political participation are acts of Christian stewardship, in which citizens can engage in a common conversation about the future of our nation and the world. I urge you to exercise your right to vote, and to encourage and help others to do so as well.

This message is available on EpiScope: <http://episcopalchurch.typepad.com/episcope/>

And as an Episcopal Life Weekly Bulletin Insert:

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/95270_11765_ENG_HTM.htm

OUTREACH:

HOLY SPIRIT, MISSOULA:

Social Concerns Project Committee update:

Join us for our welcome to Muslim students

Mark your calendars for this fall's welcome to Muslim students who are attending the University of Montana. The evening's dinner and discussion will be held on Sunday, November 23. The event is tentatively scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. in the parish hall. Please watch for specific details in bulletin inserts the preceding Sundays.

Parishioners who attended the Muslim welcome last year were treated to a delicious potluck dinner and a fascinating exchange of ideas about culture, customs, and faith. Who can forget the moving recitation of the Annunciation in Arabic?

This year, the Muslim students have decided they would like to assemble booths that display information about some of their home countries. A number also have volunteered to bring samples of well-loved native dishes.

Bulletin inserts over several Sundays preceding the event will provide details on which foods should be avoided in preparing the potluck dishes.

We are honored and excited as a parish to host this important event again this year and hope you will plan to be with us the evening of Sunday, November 23.

As-Salamu Alaykum, Peace be with you.

— LUCIA AND CLEM WORK, CO-CHAIRS, SOCIAL CONCERNS PROJECT COMMITTEE



THE PINTLER CLUSTER:

(St. Mark's, Anaconda/St. James', Deer Lodge/St. Andrew's, Philipsburg)

The Crossroads after school program has a wonderful and exciting start to the new school year. Earlier this month students were able to participate in acting workshops conducted by professional actors from the Montana Shakespeare in the Schools program. Later that evening the students were treated to a 75 minute production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. The Shakespeare in the Schools was brought by the support of the Red Hat Ladies, Anaconda Friends of Shakespeare, and Crossroads.

The following week students were visited by Nate Leipziger, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, and several other concentration camps under the Nazis. At one point Nate was asked - if he wouldn't be offended - to show his tattooed number. He responded, "Offended! It is my trophy!" and quickly rolled up his sleeve. He explained something many had never considered - only those that were allowed to live and not sent immediately to the gas chamber were tattooed. He talked about the murder of 400,000 Hungarian Jews in two months toward the end of the war. He explained how those poor people were force to wait for days for their turn in the gas chambers, because the Nazis could only gas 2,000 at a time and the crematorium could only handle 10,000 a day - it ran 24/7.

Nate also shared with the group his faith. During the war he believed as much as a 15 year old boy can, but after the war he lost his faith. "How could an omnipotent God allow such as this to happen and not do anything about it?" Eventually he returned to the faith when he began to understand that God is beyond understanding and that it was the evil of man - not God - that caused those atrocities. "I finally came to realize, we can't understand God. That helped me return to faith and blame man for what happened," he said. "We were victims of that evil. It was man that chooses evil. Anyone that claims to know God is arrogant. I disagree with my rabbis as well. My view is not traditional." He was very humble in saying these things, but Fr. John's personal opinion is that Nate Leipziger knows more about God than many. Nate's visit was organized by the Anaconda Coalition for Tolerance Education. Below, Nate is seen showing his number to the Crossroads students and a group shot of Nate with a few of the students.





In the next few weeks students will be visited by the Vice President of 1st National Bank of Montana to help them understand how to establish and maintain good credit and how to setup checking and savings accounts.

On the last Sunday of October the students will be working with Margaret Ricci, the organist at St. Mark's, in putting together a concert benefitting the after school programs. The Community Hospital of Anaconda has agreed to match all funds raised up to \$2,500!

Through the Crossroads program the members of the Pintler Cluster are dedicated to the care and nurture of those youth living in their communities.



The 2009 Grant Applications are now available at the Diocesan Office – 406-442-2230

EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT:

Sowing the Seeds of Stability



The future looks brighter today than it has for a long time, according to Beatrice, a resident of Palaka, a small village along Lake Victoria in western Kenya. Like many women in the region, Beatrice lost children to AIDS and is now responsible for the care of her grandchildren. For years, her only assets were two acres of land, which she and her husband cultivated for their income. However, they simply couldn’t earn enough to feed all the children and make ends meet.

Through a partnership with the **Ecumenical Church Loan Fund**, Episcopal Relief & Development provided Beatrice and a group of women in her community with training and seed money. They were encouraged to grow sunflowers, as sunflower oil is a daily staple in the region, and the process for extracting the oil requires only a small investment in a simple machine.

Half of Beatrice’s land is now devoted to growing sunflowers. She can sell both the sunflower oil and the sunflower seeds for income. Together with the other women in her group, she learned to place bee hives in close proximity to the sunflower fields, allowing them to extract flavorful honey and sell it locally. For Beatrice, Episcopal Relief & Development’s assistance has brought her financial stability, progress and hope for her grandchildren’s future.

<http://www.er-d.org/>

Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth

By The Rev. Canon Maurice Champion-Garthe

BARGAIN!

At the diocesan convention a couple of weeks ago, I spoke of the progress we are making in implementing our new Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth. Taken from a format sent out by the Church Insurance Corporation, Dave Campbell and I worked many hours to simplify and streamline the document to tailor it to the needs of Montana and to make them easier to use. This new document was approved by the Bishop, Chancellor, and Standing Committee earlier this year.

The new policies feature a couple of things to note. First, background checks cover more people, even those who work even occasionally, with children and youth. The Policies include congregational leadership (Vestry, etc.) at a different level of background checks than for Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, and youth group leaders and assistants. The reasons are simple: it is right to protect our children.

Some of these standards are not new; but we have had most of them on the books since the 2002 policy manual went into effect. The old policies called for thorough background checks and interviews. The new policies expect them. This part is the economic aspect. At an administration workshop last year, Mr. Jerry Ulrich of the Church Insurance Corp. told us that one of the best ways to protect both young people and our parishes is by conducting those thorough background checks as well as personal interviews for people being hired. At worst, a parish not having done the checks needed will either find that they have little or no liability coverage in these matters, or that their premiums go very high should there, God forbid, be a judgment against a parish because of lack of enforcement.

The second thing to note is the cost. We have contracted with Oxford Documents—the company which does our complete background checks on all clergy graduating from seminary, or entering our diocese to take a call—to do these new background checks. Of course they are not free. For all people who work even occasionally with children and youth, the cost is \$58 minimum, depending on how many counties the person has lived in for the last 7 years. Vestry and other leaders have a \$20 background check, again not only to make sure our parish leadership is clear, but that they should have knowledge of what is going on, and why. It is they who must oversee and implement the programs.

Here is the bargain: these prices do not take effect until January 1, 2009. Until that time you can get a criminal background check on all of the above on all persons who have lived in the same Montana community for just \$10 each through the State of Montana. All background checks are good for five years, whether done now or after the first of the year.

The full policies are available at the diocesan web site: www.mtepisopal.org. Click on LINKS, then POLICIES for these procedures.

Blessings,
Canon Mo+



Our 14 year old dog, Abbey, died last month. The day after she died, my four year old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey. She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her. I told her that I thought we could so she dictated these words:

*Dear God,
Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I am happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick.*

I hope you will play with her. She likes to play with balls and to swim. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her. You will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.

Love, Meredith.

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey and Meredith, and addressed it to God/Heaven. We put our return address on it. Then Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven. That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office. A few days later, she asked if God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, 'To Meredith'...in an unfamiliar hand writing. Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, 'When a Pet Dies'. Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note:

Dear Meredith,

Abbey arrived safely in heaven.

Having the picture was a big help. I recognized Abbey right away. Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart. Abbey loved being your dog. Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in, so I am sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.

Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and sending it to me. What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you.

I send my blessings every day and remember that I love you very much.

By the way, I'm easy to find, I am wherever there is love.

Love,

God

**The National Episcopal Historians and Archivists
509 Yale Avenue
Swarthmore PA 19081**

October 6, 2008

Ms. Barb Hagen
The Episcopal Diocese of Montana
515 North Park Avenue
Helena MT 59601

Dear Ms. Hagen:

The 19th Historic Episcopal Churches Engagement Calendar is off the press and available for purchase.

The 2009 collection presents 53 churches – all new, never repeated – with photograph and vignette. There is one for every state plus the District of Columbia plus one extra for Arizona and Florida. The Church of the Incarnation in Great Falls represents Montana.

While a few of the congregations were in existence prior to the Revolution, most were founded in the 19th century; several are far more recent. Two will be celebrating centennials in 2009 – St. Mark's, Mesa, Arizona and St. John's, Colville, Washington.

We have parishes that are predominantly native American, several predominantly black, and one that serves two Sudanese congregations. We have stories that are uplifting, stories that tell of hard times, stories that are pure fun. Here one can learn that in the 1700's, a stripe of red paint circling a church was a sign of welcome to native Americans; that in the 1800's, a congregation could not be organized if it did not include a confirmed male; that one church planter also planted citrus trees in the churchyard to provide income in hard times; that women – over and over again- provided the stimulus and the finances to build and maintain churches and pay the rector's salary. One church's history began in an amusement park! And the stories go on.

Our week-at-a-glance, spiral bound calendar notes all the Episcopal Church's major feasts and fasts as well as secular holidays. Cost is \$16.95 per copy. Add 10% (\$3.00 minimum) for postage and handling. Payment by check or money order should accompany orders sent to: NEHA, 509 Yale Avenue, Swarthmore, PA 19081. (There is a discount for bulk orders of 10 copies or more. Call 610-544-1886 or e-mail nehahqs@aol.com).

Sincerely,

Ms. A. Margaret Landis, Editor

